INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH AN INTERGENERATIONAL BRIDGE BUILDING MODEL

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ABSTRACT

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP THROUGH AN
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BUILDING MODEL

by
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The setting of this project is the New Hope Baptist Church in Metuchen, New Jersey. The problem is high attrition among millennials. Effectively addressing the problem requires the development of a comprehensive discipleship program, with intentional intergenerational partnerships, to strengthen millennials' faith and commitment to the church, equipping them to become mature disciples to fulfill the Great Commission and igniting a passion to participate in the church's life. vThis seven-week project uses data such as surveys, focus groups, journaling, and interviews for information gathering, to create and implement an intergenerational discipleship model to bridge the generational gap.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank God, my source, my sustainer, and my everything. It was God's strength that continually empowered me to persevere through the rigors of this academic journey. My journey at United Theological Seminary gave the guidance and laid the foundation and formation for the completion of this project. I sincerely appreciate the United Theological Seminary faculty and staff for their support, care, and encouragement in shaping my studies and spiritual formation.

To my cohort and colleagues, with whom I had the honor of journeying through this process, I have gained meaningful relationships and partnerships that are unparalleled and will continue to shape my ministry for the future. There are no words sufficient to fully express my gratitude and appreciation for my mentors, Rev. Dr. Donald Hilliard, Jr., and Rev. Dr. Christopher Michael Jones. Their guidance and wisdom have been immeasurable, and I am deeply indebted to them for their unwavering leadership, guidance, wisdom, insights, counsel, and scholarship. I am honored to be recognized as a Hilliard-Jones Fellow, a distinction that reflects the invaluable mentorship and support I have received throughout this journey.

I would like to acknowledge the invaluable council and partnership of my collegial collaborators in the development and implementation of my DMin project. My peer associate Pastor Khalil Carmichael, whose feedback kept me grounded; context associate Pastor Donna Owusu-Ansah, whose creativity and innovated ways helped my

design; and professional associates Rev. Dr. Joy Lynch, whose knowledge and expertise on providing a lesson was indispensable; Rev. Dr. Brian Rawls, whose encouragement and telephone talks kept me grounded; Rev. Dr. Nicole B. Simpson, whose recommendation of books that helped me with knowledge of my subject; and Rev. Dr. Anita R. Wright, whose consistent guidance provided a steadiness in the project's foundation. Each of you has played an essential role in shaping and guiding this project. From the bottom of my heart, I thank each of you for your time and support.

To all my beloved family members, I extend my wholehearted thanks. Your consistency with your patience and encouragement kept me in the race. Thank you for believing in me when, "the road grew rough, the going got tough, and the hills became hard to climb." When the weeks were long and the nights grew late, your prayers, your understanding, your sacrifices, your talks, your encouragement, and your love carried me through as well as provided the space I needed to complete this assignment in this season. This achievement is not mine alone, but it is ours.

I always save the best for last. To my beloved husband and son, Andrew and James White—thank you for being my heartbeat: steady, life-giving, and a silent strength. Your steady love has kept me through my ups and downs, my highs and lows, my twists and turns, and my pressures and progress. My heart overflows with gratefulness for your love and support you poured into me during this journey.

DEDICATION

This project is dedicated to my Pastor, Bishop Ronald L. Ownes and the New Hope Baptist Church of Metuchen. This project evolved from the visionary leadership of Pastor Owens and the real-life context of New Hope Baptist Church. It is within this leadership and context that shapes my heart for ministry and vision for discipleship.

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The call to ministry is a call to give your life. It is not a call to status—it is a call to service.

—Prathia Hall, *Freedom Faith: The Womanist Vision of Prathia Hall*

INTRODUCTION

Jesus urges the Church to be and make disciples of "all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20). This call characterizes the discipleship-making process as inclusive, collaborative, and intergenerational. The Church must look at this mandate as a fundamental part of the Church's mission. Discipleship stands at the heart of the Church's mission. This mission is for all generations and serves as the primary means by which the Church participates in God's redemptive work in the world, regardless of context, culture, and creed. However, it is difficult to see Christ's mandate as a way of bridging the gap between generations. How does the Church develop an intergenerational approach to ensure all disciples feel valued, understood, and fully included in the Church's life? Our attention to these foci is both crucial and invaluable.

This project, "Intentional Discipleship Through an Intergenerational Bridge Building Mode," involved a seven-week comprehensive intergenerational discipleship program giving the church's intergenerational members more than contextual processes but discipleship that energized, empowered, and equipped all generations to serve one another, so they can go and serve the world. Thus, the project explored ways and lessons to bridge the generational gaps at New Hope Baptist Church, connecting the older generation with the younger generation in hoping all generations be discipled and participate in the life of the church.

Chapter One

Ministry Focus determined the interaction of the ministry context's needs with my strengths, weaknesses, interests, and concerns. It served as the first step in shaping the project by articulating how these elements would be covered. The ministry's focus included a preliminary abstract that included a problem statement, hypothesis, methodology, time frame, intended data sources, and anticipated results.

Chapter Two

Biblical Foundations, Matthew 28:16-20 is the narrative for this project. The evangelist recalls Jesus's instructions to disciples as: "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). Biblical scholars and commentators refer to this text as the Great Commission. In adhering to and fulfilling the Great Commission, we all can contribute to bridging generational gaps. The Great Commission lends credence to an intergenerational approach to discipleship- making because it is grounded in biblical and historical truths that weaken the widening gap of cultural differentiation.

As such, embracing the Great Commission brings individuals together as an intergenerational community to have mutually inclusive discourse and collective action in discipling, worship, prayer, fellowship, and ministry, thereby creating fruitful pathways for spiritual growth.

Chapter Three

Historical Foundations: Having history on our side means we have examples from the past that support our beliefs and actions. As we have witnessed throughout our

exploration of John Calvin, we have discovered through history that discipleship is not merely a religious obligation, practice, or a set of rules to be followed, but it is a life-altering calling made by Jesus Christ. However, intergenerational culture can create uncertainties that widen the generational gap. On the other hand, being intentional and implementing a discipleship program with disciples that bridge the gap is about giving individuals the tools to go forth and share the gospel with others beyond their generation. Jesus called all disciples to serve as catalysts and vessels of transformation for other people's growth. By doing this, we create disciples who develop more disciples, continuing a cycle of development and transformation.

John Calvin, the renowned Protestant theologian, made significant contributions in his work of making disciples by using a framework based on biblical principles. A discipleship project that applies some of Calvin's concepts will help empower and transform individuals, churches, and communities and ultimately impact the world. Calvin strongly emphasized community and instructed his disciples that the goal was to involve everyone. His method of instruction helped close the generational divide by using God's guidance to promote knowledge, discussion, and theological comprehension applicable to everyone's faith.

Chapter Four

Theological Foundations exploring Pneumatology, the theological study of the Holy Spirit, informed my doctoral project by laying the biblical foundation for the person and work of the Holy Spirit, and by also giving disciples tools that will help foster dependency on the Holy Spirit's leading and guiding for the participants ministry's growth and maturing disciples to fulfill the Great Commission mandated by Jesus in

Matthew 28:16-20, which posited baptism, teaching, and discipleship making among all peoples and in all nations.[1]

The Holy Spirit is fundamental in empowering Christians worldwide and all generations to intentionally engage in discipleship. This empowerment fostered spiritual growth equips participants to actively live out their faith in the community of the church.

Intergenerational discipleship emphasized the passing down of faith from generation to generation. For example, the book of Timothy suggests that while elder generations are called to lead, guide, and support younger generations, the Holy Spirit is the uniting force that enables the younger generations to provide an example for others (1 Timothy 4:12-13).

Disciples must allow the Holy Spirit to transform them to share their experiences and insights because the Holy Spirit can be transformative for each generation. It is this dynamic that helps to bridge the generational gap.

Furthermore, in the article, *"A New Model for Intergenerational Discipleship,"* Ben Hein reveals, "Research indicates that intergenerational relationships significantly contribute to the resilience of faith among younger generations. Those who maintain close connections with older adults in their church are more likely to remain committed to their faith into adulthood."[2] Therefore, the Holy Spirit helps generations to come together and allow a sense of belonging that will foster accountability and commitment to ministry and each other. If this happens, spiritual development can take place.

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[1] White, Crystal, *Theological Foundations Paper,* United Theological Seminary, 2024.

[2] Ben Hein, "A New Model for Intergenerational Discipleship," *Ben Hein*, accessed August 29, 2024, https://benhein.us/a-new-model-for-intergenerational-discipleship/.

Chapter Five

Interdisciplinary Foundations examined the identity formation process. Identity formation is a pedagogical theory that proposes that individuals develop their sense of self through education and learning experiences throughout their lifetime. The goal was to learn pedagogical principles of identity formation to shape an intergenerational discipleship program that provided a strong foundation for identifying oneself in the church and social world while impacting one's sense of self, personal growth, and self-awareness, so Christian disciples can become active disciples of Christ in society. As pedagogical tools were implemented, like storytelling and collaborative learning through an intergenerational discipleship program, we established an environment where Christians of all ages engage in meaningful discourse, share their spiritual journeys, and learn from each other.

Chapter Six

Project Analysis offered a structured process for critically evaluating the project's design, implementation, methodology, and data outcomes. This chapter presents evidence that supports the stated hypothesis, assesses the effectiveness of the applied methodology, and examines the relevance of participant feedback. The data gives insights into the strengths and weaknesses of discipleship practices at New Hope Baptist Church, as identified by those engaged in the discipleship project.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

Introduction

Problem

My context is an aging African American Baptist congregation in Middlesex County, New Jersey, of which I am the Associate Pastor of Operations.

Hypothesis

The problem is high attrition among millennials. Effectively addressing the problem requires the development of a comprehensive discipleship program, with intentional intergenerational partnerships, to strengthen millennials' faith and commitment to the church, equipping them to become mature disciples to fulfill the Great Commission and igniting a passion to participate in the church's life.

Methodology

My methodology *Direct Observation. Studying Congregations* explains the Direct Observation method as a way of learning about congregations by observing their activities and interactions firsthand. The technique involves spending time in the community and watching their worship services, meetings, and other activities.[1] My observation protocol describes what happens when new members join New Hope Baptist

[1] Ammerman, Nancy T., et al eds., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Abingdon: Abingdon, 1998), 199.

Church. The expected results would be to see new believers who join the New Hope Baptist Church fully assimilated in the life of the ministry of the church, growing in their relationship with Christ, and equipped to become disciples, serving each other, and to make disciples as mature disciples of Christ.

As a believer in Christ and an ordained minister of the Gospel with an abiding love for God and God's church, I was interested in discipleship that would bridge the generation gap in the congregation between the older generation and the younger generations for the spiritual and numerical growth of the church. I took Jesus's commission seriously to "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."[1] Yet, as the Pastor of Operations at the New Hope Baptist Church (NHBC), I observed a high attrition rate among new disciples who join NHBC and seem to disappear through an invisible back door. The synergy paper addressed how my interest in discipleship skills training gained momentum through helping others in support group settings, clinical pastoral education (CPE), prison ministry, and the awareness of a need for an effective discipleship program at New Hope Baptist Church. It is that interest in developing effective disciples that forms the foundation of this doctoral project. One should not assume that when other generations join the church, they know what it means to be a disciple and how to become or make disciples. This ignorance on the part of the believer about what a disciple is and Christ's directive to the church to make disciples can

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[2] Matt. 28:19-20 (NRSV).

happen when the church has no strategic plan for discipleship, which creates an environment where all generations feel welcomed, included, and valued. Discipleship is more than holding on to one's faith; it allows the Holy Spirit to mature believers and help them grow, so they may understand their faith, apply their faith, use their gifts in the ministry, and lead others to Christ.

Before serving at NHBC, I had been appointed and consecrated to lead and teach women at the Just 4 Women (J4W) Organization. Just 4 Women was a New Jersey non-profit organization that provided hope to women who found themselves in broken and undesirable situations. I served in a servant-leadership capacity for more than ten years. I had been responsible for organizing and implementing the curriculum, teaching lessons, providing counseling resources, developing life skills, and facilitating activities of J4W. In addition, I engaged with women to offer solid group conversations and restorative practices for living out their faith. Although discipleship had not been the primary goal for J4W, I witnessed many women being discipled through our program.

Additionally, as a servant-leader at my former church, Greater Refuge Church of Christ, as the Women Auxiliary President, I organized, planned, and implemented programs, workshops, and discussions on spiritual, development faith formation, and theological understanding of Scripture to various generations of women within the church to meet their spiritual, emotional, and educational needs. There, too, I saw the transformative power of intentional discipleship.

These experiences stayed with me in hospital chaplaincy and prison ministry. At J4W, chaplaincy, and prison ministry, there was a struggle to get people to move beyond individual discipleship to being disciples who replicate themselves in the world. My

experiences have proven to be necessary to those I served. My experience also created my passion for making disciples– getting people to follow Christ, walk with Christ, live like Christ, work for Christ, and share Christ, so others will follow Christ. I believe I have been called to be a strategist who will help disciple others, particularly the generations at NHBC, as God adds daily to the number of those being saved.

As I reflect on my time at the prison, I came across a young lady I met doing my first internship at a previous jail site where I taught weekly Bible Study. I didn't know she had been moved to the prison where I was now serving as a preacher and teacher. Nor did she know I would be the one doing Bible Study. She came in during the first Bible study group. When we locked eyes, we smiled because of the connection and relationship built during her time at the previous jail site. I was excited to see her, and she was excited to see me. She was shining like a bright light that filled a dark room.

I let out Bible study a little early to spend more time conversing with the ladies individually about situations they needed to share. She purposely stayed back to be the last person in line. We hugged, and I cried. She asked me, "Why was I crying?" I said I was crying because I was happy to see her and thought she would be home by now and not be transferred to prison. She then told me there was no need to shed tears, only if it was tears of joy. I then asked, "Why?" She described how the Bible studies we had at the other jail site transformed her life in prison. She was looking at twenty-five years to life. She wasn't fazed at the time that she might get, but she had most of the discipleship lessons I taught to lean on. The lessons were still empowering and enlightening for her. We declared that day we would change our prayer request for her, and she would continue to come to Bible study.

At the subsequent Bible study, she brought other inmates with her after telling them how the Bible studies helped her get through her first year of being in jail. God continued to transform her life and those who attended the Bible study. She went from maximum security to grounds. On grounds, during her presence in chapel service, at the end of the service, she approached me to let me know she was going home without having to go to a halfway house. Tears began to flow down my face because when I first met this young lady, she was dispirited, downcast, and discouraged. She wanted nothing to do with God. I take joy in the fact that I witnessed, before my eyes, discipling turned into a spiritual transformation. In *Disciple Making Is… How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence,* authors Early and Dempsey write, "As we share the Gospel, the Holy Spirit speaks to the heart of the nonbeliever, convincing and convicting them, pursuing, and persuading them. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit convicts them of sin, righteousness, and judgment."[2] After leaving the prison, I received a letter from her thanking and telling me about the goodness of God. Extraordinarily, the work of the Holy Spirit did not end there but continued as she went on to share her testimony and the gospel of Jesus Christ.

In *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook,* Ammerman, Carroll, Dudley, and McKinney suggest, "To think of congregations as places where religious life can be studied, where human efforts at giving order and meaning to life can be understood, and where the practices of the human community can be examined."[3] When examining New

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[2] Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Disciple Making Is . . . How to Live the Great Commission with Passion and Confidence* (B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 31-32.

[3] Nancy T. Ammerman, Jackson W. Carroll, Carl S. Dudley, and William McKinney, eds., *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998), 9.

Hope Baptist Church, records indicate that New Hope received thirty-five new members since 2018. As of 2023, New Hope retained 48.5% of new members since 2018. The 51.5% are no longer at NHBC due to illness or relocation, but many quietly left out the back door. As the late Rev. Dr. Katie Cannon often said, "I must do the work my soul must have." My soul's work in this season of life and ministry is discipleship ministry that brings generations together.

The NHBC does not have an ongoing discipleship-making program that affirms the Great Commission of Jesus, as found in Matthew 28:18-20. The Great Commission is more than doing missions, participating in activities, and "information transfer" in a new membership class. When I read Matthew 28:18-20 and Ephesians 4:1-16, it is evident that discipleship is a lifestyle of grace and growth. Discipleship is God's will for the believer's life. Therefore, this synergy paper allows me to incorporate my passion for improving one's relationship with God and dedicate myself to actively participating with God and in New Hope Baptist Church.

Context

I currently serve as the Associate Pastor of Operations at the New Hope Baptist Church in Metuchen, Middlesex County, New Jersey, with 150 members registered. Serving at New Hope is an honor and privilege. Being called to serve in the ministry has allowed me to help disciples of New Hope to develop and grow in faith and service to Christ. While serving as Associate Pastor of Operations of New Hope, as mentioned in my context analysis paper, I found New Hope Baptist Church does well with inviting

people to Church. Still, the church does not take on the task of making disciples, so others can be discipled. In this context, ministry and auxiliary leadership are inactive in preparing, participating, and planning events for the calendar year. There appears to be little connection to the local community besides the Alcoholics Anonymous group that uses the church weekly to hold their meetings and the annual city-wide Easter Egg hunt with an added Bible lesson and lunch. A final observation is that there is no history of advocacy for social justice issues such as white supremacy, economic injustice, violence, gender inequality, sex trafficking, and gun reform. New Hope has been slow to speak out about injustice as a church.

This synergy assignment comes at a time that allows me to address the pressing need at NHBC to make discipleship a priority while bridging generational gaps that will ensure the church community reaches out to each other. The congregation excels in living out their faith when receiving guests and strangers warmly and generously because leadership has taught them that they could be "entertaining angels unawares." However, one of the needs of New Hope Baptist Church is having a discipleship process that would participate with God in transforming "angels unawares" to those who pick up their cross and follow Jesus. In other words, NHBC must welcome and embrace new members and connect and involve them in becoming disciples.

In recent years, the sole work of the congregation appears to have been making sure church doors are open and the live stream is working to provide worship and fellowship for the congregation. As Associate Pastor of Operations, I believe there is no direct emphasis on discipleship-making or community impact. New Hope needs to make disciples. Jesus said in Scripture, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations,

baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). I question how these verses are lived out in the life of New Hope Church. What role will the church have in connecting and uniting the church and the community to have "everything in common?"[4] Why does New Hope exist? How does New Hope connect with the community outside the four walls using disciple-making methods? How does New Hope purposely focus and shift to "resetting, reconnecting and reigniting" given Jesus's commission to go, make, maintain, mature, motivate, and do ministry the disciple-making way?

In my role as Associate Pastor of Operations, the needs of the ministry will allow me to use spiritual gifts to focus on helping New Hope to understand that the need of an intergenerational discipleship program is not an indictment on the church but a pursuit to take another look at Jesus's Great Commission and strategically plan how to carry out disciple-making for all generations, particularly the not yet mature members who are not immersed and invested in their faith and the church. I want to help New Hope embrace a discipleship path through action that is a consistent commitment to prayer, Bible study, community fellowship, and discipleship. The project seeks to offer New Hope the opportunity to embody her purpose by implementing programs and events that reach the community in building a disciple-making program.

The goal is to focus on discipleship formation. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the church was struggling and experiencing a decline in growth. The church had become

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[4] Acts 2:44.

a revolving door with too many members slipping out of the invisible back door. The new members would join the church, and after the completion of new members' classes that only concentrated on the covenant, constitution, and ministries at New Hope Baptist Church, the new disciples would disappear. There is a need to address this back door problem; otherwise, new growth is unlikely. To do so, the question must be considered: Is the church doing enough to disciple and maintain new members committed to working in the kingdom? Is there an infrastructure "to make disciples of Christ who make disciples of Christ?"[5] When new members join, is there a means for the discipleship growth to enhance and encourage match new members' development?

Making disciples should be one of the primary functions of New Hope. Before ascending into heaven, Jesus's last words to his disciples were to make disciples of all nations. Why is making disciples important? Discipleship is important to ensure that all who join New Hope are equipped to learn, grow, and be fully committed to being followers of Christ and going to tell others about Christ. Becoming a follower of Christ means helping others get to know God so that, in turn, they will make God known to each other and others. As God is known to others through the Gospel of Jesus Christ, intentional and structural discipleship is the most authentic way to consistently grow. The idea is sanctification, which means striving to become like Christ through discipleship. In doing so, one develops and matures, obeying the discipleship mandate. As Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ."

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[5] Church Plant Media. www.churchplantmedia.com, "AABC Blog," *Asian American Baptist Church: Richardson, TX*, accessed April 14, 2023, https://www.aabcdallas.org/blog/keyword/church-retreat.

Without a discipleship track, the congregation, if not already, will become spiritually stagnant or something Jesus never intended. When looking closely at Jesus's definitive command, "Go… make… baptize… teach," (Matthew 28:19) there is movement, not stagnation. When water is not flowing, stagnation occurs, then the water becomes undrinkable. Like stagnant water, without a discipleship plan, the church's life becomes cloudy, unclear, and hazardous, and bacteria grows. In time, like stagnant water attracts parasites, a stagnant church attracts parasites of complacency, cliques, and comfort. This can become a spiritual parallel for the weakness or death in the growth of discipleship. As laid out by Jesus's three-year ministry, discipleship is the key to individual and communal growth and Christian faith, which flows like rivers of living water.

Ministry Journey

Having established skills and interests that I use in serving the church and community, God has placed me in New Hope Baptist Church to serve so that my ministry will fit my giftedness, and I can serve excellently. In the *Spiritual Autobiography Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story,* Richard Peace states, "Preparing your story causes you to notice and remember what God has been doing in your life over time."[6]

Over time, my past experiences have shaped, formed, and taught me how to live the life of a disciple. This occurred through being discipled and making disciples at my

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[6] Richard Peace, *Spiritual Autobiography: Discovering and Sharing Your Spiritual Story: A Spiritual Formation Study Guide* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1998), 8.

previous church, Greater Refuge Church of Christ, Plainfield. After receiving Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I was immediately instructed to attend new members and discipleship classes. The first focus was to learn the polity and auxiliaries of the church and then step into discipleship classes with the Pastor every Sunday morning during Sunday School hours. In the King James Version, Matthew 12:30-31, I learned, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like this: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." This verse was taught on the basis that if this Scripture was applied to my life, I would grow and be more like Jesus in my love for God by actively spending time in the presence of God, reading God's Word, and staying connected to God through prayer; my love for others by loving my sisters and brothers in the family of God; and my love for neighbors by loving everyone outside of my faith.

At the beginning stages of my new birth, I could not grasp this three-directional command of Jesus. How would this biblical text help me to grow and be more like Christ? Discussing the "metamorphosis" process of a caterpillar's experience as it transforms into a butterfly became the theme of our discipleship classes. The idea was to keep our eyes gazing into the face of Jesus, and if so, a process of transformation can and would take place, a change that will equip Christians for ministry and maturity in God (Ephesians 4:11-13). That is what happened to me. I learned how to love God and live out my purpose for God. Thus, for a long while, my life was oriented around loving God, loving others, and loving my neighbors.

In discipleship class, I became a newly saved young woman servant-leader. I became a ministry servant-leader by being taught biblical principles for living and making disciples. I faithfully served God in the local church, diocesan, and national conventions. This experience resulted in my leading and teaching in and outside the church. Being called to serve as a servant-leader allowed me the opportunity to be a part of helping other Christians develop their faith and teach them godly principles. During Bible study at the prison, I taught and provided comprehensive training in obedience, leading to the reproduction and multiplication of women, bringing other women to Bible study, and chaplain-led worship services.

In my servant-leader call, these practices I taught in prison stayed with me at Pillar College and New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS). In these spaces, particularly at Pillar College, I found myself instructing and training new converts how the Christian life should bring glory to God and bear fruit. At Pillar College, I encountered many young adults who were new to their faith and dealing with complex issues. I spent all sorts of time and energy before, between, and after classes with devotional time with the Lord and regular short discipleship lessons that emphasized how to read the Bible and live spiritual disciplines that would prepare them for life. Even though many accepted the Lord as their personal Savior, they lost their spiritual rhythm while attending college. During their time at college, some of them no longer attended church and were far removed from family, any activities, and connection to church ministry, which made them feel lonely.

In my formative years, I often found myself isolated, excluded, and alienated from family, community, and church. I understood all too well how one can feel

separated when feeling like a stranger in one's own life. There was no vortex of notifications and news feeds that could pull me into a social connection or network to cover some of my insecurities.

One of the realizations that I came to was that everyone here at the college was coming into their faith, including me. The classes we were enrolled in would allow us to meet other people with the same interests and form connections that may help pull us out of loneliness and give us a sense of belonging. We didn't have to keep our exclusion to ourselves. The same God we knew at church was present at the college and would continue to carry us through the beginning and culmination of our college experience. My discipleship lessons became more about a God who will give us saving faith and lend that faith to transform our lives so that we can continue to follow Jesus and go and tell others.

As I reflect on my journey in ministry, I question why I chose New Hope Baptist Church over a Pentecostal Association of the World Church or a Church of God in Christ Church. On the surface, these denominations seem more closely aligned with my former context than the Baptist church. However, I chose to do my Field Education outside my denomination and settled at New Hope Baptist Church for my NBTS internship. Sometimes, I found myself at a denominational crossroads. However, I was sensitive to God and got a strong sense of purpose at NHBC. My heart opened with the intent of finding greater personal truth. The longer I engaged and progressed at NHBC, the more my being there became meaningful. This is the journey upon which I now embark. The more I have grown in being discipled, the more I have discovered the need for ongoing discipling, even for mature Christians. I realized that my professional gifts and skill set from working with support groups, prison ministry, and Clinical Pastoral Education are

for "such a time as this." My experience working with small groups and one-on-one situations is, as Richard Peace reveals," Sharing your story with others, you come to a better understanding of your uniqueness as a child of God."[7] I will share my story and help new members to mature into knowing Christ, becoming followers of Christ, and becoming ambassadors for Christ.

I bring to my ministry context a motivation to "leave no disciple behind." My doctoral project will be a program that establishes a progression from salvation to spiritual growth, serving, worship, fellowship, and closing the invisible back door.

Developed Synergy

The project's goal is to develop and implement an intergenerational discipleship program that will be essential to New Hope Baptist Church's growth. This program addresses the New Hope Baptist Church's generation gap and why the millennials are disappearing through the invisible back door. This project aims to develop disciple makers—disciples who actively make other disciples, and mutual discipleship, where disciples disciple one another, thus fulfilling the Great Commission of Christ.

The ministry is to support the Pastor's vision to reset, reconnect, and re-ignite the congregation to move from inactivity to active and impactful discipleship in the church and community. The appointment was unexpected in one sense but not surprising in another. However, New Hope has been reassuring and encouraging my leadership. In the process of learning the role, it became noticeable that after new members joined New

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[7] Peace, *Spiritual* Autobiography, 8.

Hope and completed the new membership class, they went missing or sat in the pew without actively serving the ministry. It is disheartening to see disciples not active in the body of Christ. My journey was shaped by the influence of experienced teachers whose dedication to developing, nurturing, training, and guiding disciples. The discipleship track was structured so that one can develop a closer relationship with God, engage in prayer, fellowship, and worship, Bible study, serve in ministry, identify gifts and passions, forge deeper relationships and connections with others, and gain a sense of belonging. The discipleship track contributed to and helped one to mature and grow spiritually into a Christian. As one grew into adulthood, the pivotal point in life was the ability to get through life with a sense of purpose and direction. The advantage of being part of a discipleship track is that it helps equip you with the skills and knowledge you need to impact the church and the world to bring glory to God.

In the New Hope Baptist Church context, God has provided ministerial gifts, skills, and interests that will be used to formulate and implement this doctoral project. One way the ministerial gifts can further the project is with teaching. Through chaplaincy work in hospital and prison settings, there has been a demonstrated ability to share knowledge and help patients and inmates understand biblical concepts. The ability to assist in strengthening disciples' trust in God can be demonstrated through group or one-on-one sessions, addressing topics related and relevant to their life experiences.

Additionally, I was instrumental in leading a NJ non-profit organization called Just 4 Women, where I needed to show empathy and support hurting women in their transition to wholeness. Being a servant-leader at Just 4 Women, I was able to support other women by actively listening and connecting to understand their challenges and

struggles as they shared their stories. My gift and passion can be used in discipleship programs to exemplify the love of Christ and provide emotional and mental support to those who are going through difficult situations and need help navigating life. An observation was made that it was evident the women came there because they needed someone to support them and someone to talk to. Life had taken a beating on them, and for that reason, most weren't living the lives God intended for them. Hence, I had to develop a curriculum to help the women live the life God intended for them.

After each lesson on the work of the Holy Spirit, there was a space of no judgment and trust provided for the women to be transparent and share their circumstances no matter how bad and ugly they looked or seemed. The pain was shared and tears were shed. There was one woman who came consistently month after month, sat quietly, and listened, but never spoke but simply cried. One evening, I asked her what her tears represented. She told us, "Since coming to Just 4 Women and hearing the lessons on the Holy Spirit, I can see and feel the Holy Spirit flowing through me. I came to Just 4 Women because I was looking for something. And since I've been coming, I believe I'm coming out of my depression. My family is beginning to see a transformation in my life. All I want now is to allow my life to glorify God." In *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey Through Silence and Doubt*, Renita Weems notes, "It is precisely moments like these that leave me tripping up into my purpose, staggering into some insight I desperately need, and backing up into God."[8] In Just 4 Women's Moments,

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[8] Renita J. Weems, *Listening for God: A Minister's Journey through Silence and Doubt* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), 48.

women come tripping up into purpose and insight and back into God, reviving their lives and relationship with God. In doing my part, according to *Spiritual Formation Is… How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence,* "Spiritual formation is a partnership. God does his part by "working in you both to will and to work according to his good purpose." Our part is to make the effort to do his good purpose."[9]

Further, I co-facilitated a group of women called the Images of Sisterhood (IOS) at New Hope for five years. There, we led, planned, and facilitated monthly sessions of Bible study, workshops, lectures, book readings, group discussions, and fellowship until the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to fully utilize our creative ideas, technological gifts, and skills so that we remain connected to God and each other. In our sessions, Sister Kimberly comes to mind. Giving an invite to come, she came in reluctantly because of the expectations placed on her as she grew up in NHBC. After her first session with IOS, Sister Kimberly returned to the IOS sessions faithfully. Before Sister Kimberly began coming to IOS, she was not actively serving in NHBC. After attending several sessions, she became active, serving again at NHBC. You could see Sister Kimberly transforming before our eyes. After asking her how she was doing, she said, "that she could feel God working on her and giving her ideas for the ministry." In *Spiritual Formation Is… How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence,* authors Early and Dempsey write, "We grow when we are serving, not merely sitting. We grow through giving out and not just by taking in. The life of Christ in us was designed to flow through us as we minister to

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[9] Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Spiritual Formation Is: How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 29.

others."[10] We witnessed Sister Kimberly be empowered to use her mind to think differently.

Lastly, I can use my gift of administration in a discipleship program as I did in Clinical Pastoral Education. I became aware of myself as a Pastor in CPE, but I acted as a "helmswoman" guiding my ship. I had some order and direction when planning pastoral care, counseling patients, nurses, and doctors, and organizing, structuring, and facilitating presentations. My gift can plan, organize, guide, structure, and allocate people in a discipleship program. In doing so, a schedule of sessions, material resources, topics, days, times, and facilitators must be set. This will ensure that the discipleship program meets the disciples' needs, keeps the program functioning most effectively, and that the progress of the disciple's spiritual growth is structured in a relevant way. The primary goal would be faithfulness and fruitfulness in carrying out the Great Commission.

All my experiences would allow me to pivot in a way that creates a discipleship program that will transform lives, enlighten, and build up NHBC. Paul notes in I Corinthians 14:12, "So with yourselves: since you are striving after spiritual gifts, seek to excel in them for building up the church."

My project will center around the following:

1. Completing a thorough assessment of the current Discipleship Model
2. Developing goals for an Intergenerational Discipleship path

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[10] Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Spiritual Formation Is: How to Grow in Jesus with Passion and Confidence* (B&H Publishing Group, 2014), 32.

3. Designing an Intergenerational Discipleship program that will benefit all disciples
4. Evaluating the curriculum experience and retooling the program for greater effectiveness

Through my doctoral project, I seek to explore Jesus's model of intergenerational discipleship and how His model can be actualized at the NHBC. How will our intergenerational discipleship program be unique and impactful? Will it promote growth? How will it promote transformation? Will this program help us differentiate membership from discipleship? If so, how and what is the impact? All in all, I seek ultimately to train and equip disciple to be disciple-makers.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Great Commission - Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." [1]

This text identifies and serves as a guiding principle for Christians to be disciples, make disciples, and follow Christ in baptizing and teaching persons to observe and obey all things Jesus taught them. In other words, this Scripture is about practical discipleship. In Bill Hull's, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ,* Hull claims, "Discipleship is the relationship I stand into Jesus Christ in order that I might take on his character. As his disciple, I am learning from him how to live my life in the Kingdom as he would if he were I. The natural outcome is that my behavior is

[1] All Bible verses taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

transformed. Increasingly, I routinely and easily do the things he said and did."[2] As Hull points out, as disciples, we grow in our ability to authentically and effortlessly live out the things Jesus said and did. As disciples, we embrace Jesus's teachings, strive to become like him, and "step up to the task of fulfilling the mission he began."[3]

This Great Commission given to the eleven disciples in Galilee is the same call to all Christians to intentionally practice discipleship through an individual process of embracing the essence of Jesus Christ through a combination of making, maturing, motivating, and multiplying as a central act to grow and disciple others. In turn, the disciple will disciple others, not only for reproduction purposes but multiplication— one disciple makes two, two makes four, four makes sixteen, and so on. As Terry Bowland writes on the attributes of discipleship, "These are our marching orders. This is our priority. This is our goal. This is our work. This is our labor. This is our joy."[4]

What is a disciple? The term "disciple" derives from a Greek word, *mathetes*, which means "to be a pupil, with the implication of being an adherent of the teacher." In like fashion, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, explains that "Discipleship means adherence to Christ is the object of that adherence, it must take the form of discipleship."[5] To be more precise, following Christ should be the central focus of a

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[2] Bill Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship: On Being and Making Followers of Christ* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 16.

[3] Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 148.

[4] Terry A. Bowland, *Make Disciples: Reaching the Postmodern World for Christ* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing, 1999), 7–8.

[5] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), 59.

Christian life. Being a Christian is more than believing in Christ or knowing who Christ is; it is about living Christ's teachings and being examples of Christ, where Christ is transforming us from within. Becoming a disciple is a journey we take on rather than simply a name we wear.

Consequently, the principle behind being a disciple also describes the accepted term of discipleship. Hull explains, "This word discipleship is not a biblical expression, but a derivative. 'Ship' added to the end of disciple means the state of being a disciple– a sense of journey, the idea of becoming a disciple rather than having been made a disciple."[6] We can conclude then that discipleship is a byproduct and a lifelong endeavor of soldiering forward to be a transformed disciple radiating Christ to affect those around us. Thereby, participation in the Great Commission requires being a transformed disciple. To submit to transformation is an act of spiritual formation. Additionally, Adam Davis argues that spiritual formation is essentially made up of three parts or elements. Spiritual formation is, first, a process. He writes: "Attaining complete spiritual maturity is a lifelong process."[7] Secondly, God works in a believer as an "act of grace in the believer's life."[8] Thirdly, it is human effort working with the Holy Spirit or "cooperation with the Holy Spirit."[9] To explain further, spiritual formation is a process where a disciple unites

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[6] Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 15.

[7] Adam Davis, *"A Study to Determine the Relationship of scores of Adult Sunday School teachers to scores of Adult Sunday School learners on a Spiritual Formation Practice Participation Inventory."* (PHD. Diss, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 19.

[8] Adam Davis, *A Study to Determine the Relationship of scores of Adult Sunday School teachers.*

[9] Adam Davis, *A Study to Determine the Relationship of scores of Adult Sunday School teachers.*

with God and allows God to work in them to undergo spiritual formation, which the disciple will spiritually mature.

The doctoral project will cover the importance of an intergenerational discipleship program that addresses the generation gap and attrition problem at the New Hope Baptist Church of Metuchen, New Jersey. Our goal is to close the invisible back door and develop solutions that strengthen our congregation's faith and commitment. For many, if asked about our faith, we, without hesitation, will declare our identification as a Christian. But in our society, that answer can sometimes mean nothing more than I believe in a higher power. Bonhoeffer explains, "Christianity without the living Christ is inevitably Christianity without discipleship, and Christianity without discipleship is always Christianity without Christ."[10] Saying you are a Christian does not necessarily mean you follow, obey, and walk in the ways of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the question becomes, "How does Matthew 28:16-20 inform us about ways to provoke all Christians to actively engage in the mission of being disciples by living a life of discipleship and disciple-making?" One step toward understanding this question is to engage in a closer study of how responding to the Great Commission is a transformative work of spiritual formation in the life of the Christian. As disciples are formed spiritually, they are compelled to share the good news of Jesus and invite others to follow Him.

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[10] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* 59.

Exegesis

The Gospel of Matthew "likely was composed between AD 70 and 110. The start of this range reflects the date (AD 65–70) typically given for the Gospel of Mark, which Matthew uses as a source."[11] Matthew is the first book of the New Testament and is attributed to the Apostle Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew contains numerous teachings of Jesus than any other Gospel. There are several factors that influence the historical context of the Gospel of Matthew.

First, the Gospel of Matthew was written for a Jewish Christian audience. Jesus is the promised Messiah of the Old Testament, fulfilling Jewish prophecies and teaching His disciples how to follow him and live as disciples. Second, in 70 AD, the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. The destruction of the Temple is referenced in Jesus's prophecies about the end times and the judgment of Jerusalem. Third, "the early Christian community influences the historical context of the Gospel of Matthew. The Gospel of Matthew was written while the early Christian community was still developing its beliefs and practices. According to most scholars, the author's purpose was to present Jesus as the Messiah and guide the growing Christian community."[12] These factors shaped the content and themes of the Gospel and its intended audience.

At the same time, Matthew portrays Jesus and His followers as being distanced from the Jewish community and in sharp conflict with them (4:23; 7:29; 9:35; 10:17;

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[11] Jeff Cate, "Matthew, Gospel of," in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

[12] Cate, "Matthew, Gospel of."

12:9; 13:54; 27:62–66; 28:11–15). Matthew records Jesus rebuking the Jewish religious leaders (6:1–18; 23:1–36), and the text appears to blame the Jewish religious leaders more than the Roman empire for Jesus's death (27:20–25). Furthermore, Matthew emphasizes the kingdom given to the Gentiles (8:11–12; 20:1–16; 21:28–32, 43; 22:8–10). The Gospel of Matthew culminates with Christ being resurrected after being wrongfully sentenced to death by a criminal crucifixion and giving His disciples the Great Commission (28:16–20). The Great Commission provides a fitting ending to the gospel that begins with the lineage of Jesus, the King of the Jews, and ends with an authoritative command to extend his kingdom to all peoples.[13]

The repetition highlights the central importance of the Great Commission in four different passages: Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47; John 20:21; Acts 1:8 and three locations: Jerusalem, Galilee, and the Mount of Olives.[14]

MATTHEW 28:16— "Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them."

Matthew's beginning gives the reader a peek in the story from the Gospel. Matthew 28:16 establishes the narrative where it began in Galilee. Readers are reminded of Judas's betrayal and demise. The disciples were chosen from among fishermen, tax collectors, and zealots. Throughout the gospel of Matthew, the disciples followed Jesus, witnessed his miracles, and learned from his teachings.

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[13] Holman Bible Publishers, *CSB Disciple's Study Bible: Notes* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017), 1476. Exported from Logos Bible Software, 8:02 AM October 21, 2023.

[14] Holman, *CSB Disciple's Study Bible: Notes*, 1476.

Jesus and the disciples are not simply coming home; Galilee signifies hope for the Gentiles (4:15–16), the broader family of nations to whom the disciples will soon be sent (19).[15] Most of Jesus's ministry took place in Galilee, and he returned there after his resurrection to give the Great Commission to his disciples. The movement to Galilee, away from the center of the establishment in Jerusalem, evokes not only the birth narrative but also important events that happened on the mountain: the temptation story (4:8-10), Jesus's move to Galilee after John's arrest (4:12–17), the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount (5:1; 8:1), Jesus's retreat for prayer (14:23), His healing of the crowds (15:29), the mount of transfiguration (17:1-8), and the Mount of Olives (21:1; 24:3; 26:30).[16]

MATTHEW 28:17— "When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted."

When the disciples see Jesus, some worship, and others doubt. These two elements establish one of the primary scenarios on the mountaintop. First, the Greek word "worship" is *proskyneo*. "It is used to denote the custom of prostrating oneself before persons and kissing their feet or the hem of their garment, the ground; to express in attitude or gesture one's complete dependence on or submission to a high authority figure (fall down and) worship, to do obeisance, prostrate oneself before, do reverence to,

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[15] Richard B. Gardner, *Matthew*, *Believers Church Bible Commentary* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 401.

[16] Stamper A A. Meda, "Exegetical Perspective on Matthew 28:16–20," in *Feasting on the Word: Preaching the Revised Common Lectionary: Year A*, ed. David L. Bartlett and Barbara Brown Taylor, vol. 3 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 47.

welcome respectfully."[17] According to Spence-Jones, "This is the first time that this action of supreme worship is mentioned in connection with the disciples, though the women had offered the same homage to him."[18] The reference to worship points back to a few instances of people worshipping Jesus. The magi on finding Jesus (2:11-12), the disciples worship Jesus after He walks on water, the women worship Jesus in Matthew 28:9, and the disciples worship Jesus on the mountain. Nonetheless, another relevant incident proskyneo in Matthew 4:10 states, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." Here, we see that Jesus implies that God is the only one to be worshiped.

Therefore, it is fitting that the disciples would worship Jesus, considering they witnessed His execution and burial. Despite the apparent end on Calvary, they now have the undeniable confirmation of His resurrection, leaving no doubt to some that He is the Messiah. Craig Keener writes, "Those who see him worship him, which suggests that they recognize him for who he is—the "God with them"[19] With their own eyes, they recognize that Jesus is now more than human, and their teacher Jesus is the Lord of life, exercising power even over death.

Matthew makes room for doubt alongside worship in the glory of Christ's resurrection. Many scholars have different opinions on those doubting. "There is (a) all of

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[17] William Arndt et al., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 882.

[18] H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *St. Matthew*, vol. 2, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 644.

[19] Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009), 716.

the eleven disciples, (b) some of the eleven disciples, or (c) some who were other than the eleven disciples."[20] The question becomes, what kind of "doubt" does Matthew have in mind? The word "doubt" in Matthew 28:17 is translated as *distazo*, meaning "to be uncertain about taking a particular course of action, hesitate."[21] It carries the connotation that Matthew affirms that when Jesus appeared in His resurrection glory, it created apprehension for some, as in Peter's loss of confidence when walking on water in 14:31. In this context, it is unclear why some of them doubted. However, despite having plenty of compelling evidence, some still hesitated as they came to terms with the resurrected Christ.

MATTHEW 28:18— "And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

While overlooking their doubt, Jesus tells the disciples that "all authority has been given to him," He reassures them as he did in 17:7, "But Jesus came and touched them, saying, get up and do not be afraid." According to R. T. France, it is the only other place where Matthew uses the verb "come" of Jesus.[22] In each case, the disciples are overwhelmed by a supernatural event. "Together with his touch, it conveys a reassuring

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[20] John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 2005), 1262.

[21] William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literatur*e, 252.

[22] R. T. France, *Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 419.

sense of normality restored."[23] This idea is that Jesus comes to them with a comforting approach, echoed by Daniel 7:14, "To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship shall never be destroyed." This indicates that Jesus has "all authority in heaven and on earth" by the will of God. "Authority" comes from the Greek word *exousia*, which denotes "power" from the impersonal verb *exesti*, "it is lawful." From the meaning of "leave or permission," or liberty of doing as one pleases, it passed to that of "the ability or strength with which one is endued," then to that of the "power of authority," the right to exercise power.[24] The various meanings exemplify that Jesus's authority covers all realms and all times and is universal and purposeful. In other words, "I have all things in heaven and on earth at my disposal to accomplish this mission that I am about to give you."[25]

MATTHEW 28:19— "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."

At this point, our success as disciples of Christ is based on something other than who we are or what we can do, but on who Jesus is and what Jesus can do in our lives as

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[23] R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*: *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publication Co., 2007), 651.

[24] W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: T. Nelson, 1996), 45.

[25] David Platt, "Two Simple Words: Make Disciples," in *David Platt Sermon Archive* (Birmingham, AL: David Platt, 2007), 583.

His disciples. His charge to us is first, "Go and make disciples." "Go" is a participle. A participle is a "word with characteristics of both a verb and an adjective."[26] Therefore, as we go, we make disciples (*mathēteuō*). Going is part of making disciples. "Making disciples" is to go and invite others to follow Christ. Hull argues, "A commitment to be and make disciples must be the central act of every disciple and every church."[27] As such, the best way to explain "go" is as a command and not a suggestion. It involves action. We cannot "go" if we are sitting still. We cannot "go" if we stay where we are. We cannot "go" if we do not make a move.[28] Being Jesus's disciples means that we take initiative and be intentional about going out to make disciples.

The place of "going" is to all nations. "All nations" is translated from Greek, *ethnos*. The term describes those who do not belong to the chosen people.[29] Butler argues, "This was not a commission to go just to the Jews, but it also included the Gentiles (non-Jews)."[30] We are reminded in Matthew 10 when Jesus commanded the disciples to restrict their mission to Israel. Now, that restriction has been lifted. It is God's

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[26] Michael S. Heiser and Vincent M. Setterholm, *Glossary of Morpho-Syntactic Database Terminology* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2013).

[27] Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 26.

[28] Alan Carr, "Great Commission or Great Ommission? (Matt. 28:18–20)," in *The Sermon Notebook: New Testament* (Lenoir, NC: Alan Carr, 2015), 349.

[29] Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Abridged in One Volume* (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 201.

[30] John G. Butler, *Analytical Bible Expositor: Matthew* (Clinton, IA: LBC Publications, 2008), 490.

design that the Church Jesus promised to build (16:18–19) be a universal community comprising persons from *ethnos*.[31] Many scholars suggest that it is implied that the disciples are to go into all the world, and the universal authority of Jesus is the basis of the church's universal mission.[32]

The command to "go therefore and make disciples" is followed by two participles, baptizing and teaching (v. 20), which spells out the process of making disciples. We have an authoritative command first to baptize. Baptism is a transliteration word, *baptizo*, which means "to immerse, cover, plunge, dip, and wash in water in a rite to renew or establish a relationship with God."[33] Becoming and making disciples involves publicly and self-consciously committing to be baptized. Baptism is seen as a public declaration of one's faith to follow Jesus Christ, one's faith in Christ's death, and one's faith in Christ's resurrection and return. Romans 6:4 notes, "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life." According to *Holman's Bible Publishers,*" By baptizing, the church continues carrying out the mission of introducing new disciples into the fellowship of Christ's church. The ordinance of baptism is not the

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[31] Gardner, *Matthew*: *Believers Church Bible Commentary*, 402.

[32] Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*: *Word Biblical Commentary* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1995), 33B: 886–887.

[33] William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literatur*e, 164.

end of the disciple-making task but the beginning of the disciple's journey. The disciple-maker leads new believers into a continuing growth through discipleship."[34]

Baptism occurs "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirt," which means we are baptized into the Triune God, all that Jesus is and has. We terminate our old life and are germinated with new life, as Willoughby Allen describes as "a state of allegiance and fellowship with Christ."[35]" In the name" indicates that the three persons (Trinity) should be considered one name— one God, three distinct persons that give the disciple a rebirth and new relationship that identifies with Christ.

MATTHEW 28:20— "and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

For the new disciple, baptism is the beginning. Our responsibility does not end. However, we must continue discipling other disciples by "teaching them (i.e., all nations) to obey everything Jesus commanded." Teaching is a present participle of *didasko*, meaning "keep on teaching them." That is, to teach all that Jesus has commanded. The word *didasko* also marks the continuation of the Great Commission in Acts 2:42, "They devoted themselves to the apostles 'teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." In Ephesians 4:11-13, the Apostle Paul affirms the importance of *didasko* in the context of spiritual leadership: "The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the

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[34] Holman Bible Publishers, *CSB Disciple's Study* Bible, 1476.

[35] Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew: International Critical Commentary* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1907), 306.

work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ." This Scripture highlights that the purpose of *didasko* is not merely to impart knowledge but to equip Christians for the work of the ministry and foster unity within the body of Christ. *Didasko* is the call to make, mature, motivate, multiply, and disciple, which embraces both the cognitive and transformative aspects of learning. As Christians, we must be intentional in our pursuit of *didasko*. Craig Bloomberg argues, "Teaching obedience to all of Jesus's commands forms the heart of disciple-making."[36] Disciple-making is training other disciples into obedient action: "teaching them to obey everything" Jesus commanded. Disciples, followers of Christ, must follow and abide by every teaching of Christ. We are to teach, learn, and live in a manner that is Christ-like.

Matthew closes the gospel with a promise that Christ will be with the disciples until the end. This same gospel opens with, "Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means, 'God with us' (1:23)." The same claim was given to Old Testament patriarchs, Moses (Exodus 3:12) and Joshua (Joshua 1:5). According to R. T. France, "In OT commissioning scenes the assurance of God's presence was to empower his often-inadequate servants to fulfill the task he had called them to."[37] In other words, the disciple-maker can depend on the presence of Christ to be with them, not just for a moment or a season, but always until the very end of the age.

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[36] Craig Blomberg, *Matthew: The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 22: 432.

[37] France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1119.

The Great Commission is not based on who we are or what we can do; it is not about our limitations or shortcomings, but rather about a divine mission that transcends our human capabilities and calls us to a higher purpose. We do not disciple in our strength, but we step out of our comfort zones, overcome our fears, and embrace the unknown. "The One who is named 'God-with-us 'at the outset of the Gospel (1:23) promises that he will continue to be God-with-us in his community."[38] In other words, Jesus Christ's presence with us empowers us to fulfill the task He has called us to do, which is to be and to make disciples. The mission is assured based on Christ's presence through the Holy Spirit.

Conclusion

The goal of New Hope Baptist Church is to see souls saved, individual lives transformed, church members become disciples of Christ, and to impact the community and the world. How does the DMin project facilitate this growth? How does the DMin project ensure that those who come through the New Hope Baptist Church's doors have an encounter with Jesus? How does the DMin project give the necessary tools and support to continue the intergenerational disciples 'faith journey?' How do we equip intergenerational disciples to become disciple-makers? The answer lies in the establishment of an intergenerational discipleship program.

An intergenerational discipleship program is an intentional process of helping intergenerational disciples grow in their relationship with God and in their understanding of God, God's Word, and God's purpose for their lives. It involves teaching, mentoring,

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[38] Gardner, *Matthew: Believers Church Bible Commentary*, 402.

and equipping Christians to become Christ-like in character and live out their faith practically.

By implementing an intergenerational discipleship program, the church follows Jesus's example. For three years, Jesus devoted time in His disciples'— teaching, mentoring, and preparing them for ministry. As Christ's followers today, we must imitate His example and intentionally commit to God, our call and community by nurturing the lives of others through discipleship.

An intergenerational discipleship program will foster spiritual growth, build community, equip Christians for ministry, multiply disciples and leaders, and impact the world. Discipleship is a must-needed component of any church whose goal is to please God, follow Christ, serve others with a desire to see lives transformed and people empowered. Discipleship is about effectively, through the power of the Holy Spirit, welcoming people who believe and want to passionately follow Christ into the kingdom by teaching them how to fully live out their lives for Christ in a manner that brings glory to God and advances His Kingdom.

Thus, the illustration of Matthew 28:16-20 holds profound significance in shaping a solid biblical foundation for a DMin project on intergenerational discipleship. These verses are the culmination of Jesus's earthly ministry, which encapsulates Jesus's final instructions to His disciples and His commission to them to carry on His mission before ascending into heaven. Within these words are principles and practices that guide the process of making disciples, inspire and empower Christians to embrace their divine calling and become active participants in spreading the Gospel throughout the world, grow in their faith, and fulfill their purpose.

The statement in Matthew 28:18, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me," explains Jesus's authority and power. The Church acknowledges and embraces Christ's authority; we yield our lives to the role of being disciples, guided, and empowered to navigate the path of intergenerational discipleship and disciple-making.

At the heart of the Great Commission lies the fundamental aspects of discipleship. Jesus instructs His followers "to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19-20). This commission emphasizes the importance of intentional discipleship, where Christians must create intentional spaces supporting each other. Each element of the above phrase highlights the biblical foundation for an intergenerational discipleship program.

First, Jesus claims His authority over heaven and earth. This statement reminds us that discipleship is necessary for all who submit to being disciples of Christ. The next instruction from Jesus is to "go and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). This command "to go" is not arbitrary. Jesus commanded us "to go" because He has "all authority in heaven and on earth" given to him. With Jesus's authority, we must go to all the world.

Then he instructs them to "…make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). This biblical text reminds all those who follow Christ are disciples. Disciples are to be intentional about discipling and connecting with various cultures, backgrounds, and walks of life. This type of intergenerational discipleship program supports inclusivity, diversity, and transformation.

Further in the text, Jesus tells His disciples to "baptize in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). In baptism, disciples submit to all three. The Father becomes the heavenly parent, the Son becomes the Savior, and the Holy Spirit becomes the indwelling helper, comforter, and guide who empowers the disciples to live a life pleasing to God. Roy E. Gingrich writes, "Baptism demonstrates the genuineness of our professed faith in Christ. Genuine faith includes obedience to Christ's commands and Christ commanded believers to be baptized, Matt. 28:19, so when we are baptized, we are obeying one of Christ's commands and are demonstrating that our faith is genuine."[39] In other words, in baptism, a person declares that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Savior of their lives.

The expression, "teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20), is a key point to discipleship. Discipleship requires disciples to go beyond conversion; it involves being equipped to live out discipleship by following the teachings of Jesus. An intergenerational discipleship program follows Jesus's teaching by intentionally doing what Jesus commanded. Finally, Jesus promises, "Behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." This promise assures all disciples that Jesus is always with them to carry out the Great Commission.

To sum up, the study of Matthew 28:16-20 serves as a cornerstone for an intergenerational discipleship program. It will provide a framework to guide Christians in their journey of becoming much more than New Hope Baptist Church members, but also

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[39] Roy E. Gingrich, *Four Controversial Doctrines: Speaking with Tongues, Divine Healing, the Lord's Supper, Water Baptism* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2003), 22.

disciples who will grow and make more disciples. In doing so, the project will seek to close generational gaps by celebrating and acknowledging the unique contributions of each generation.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Great Commission is a command given by Jesus Christ. According to Matthew 28:19-20, Christ stated, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." The Great Commission is a divine call to act in obedience to Christ's mandate."[1] Christian faith is not meant to be kept a secret or within the confines of our hearts or the walls of our churches, but to be continually shared among others. Chris Byrley writes, "Both being a disciple as well as making disciples is an integral part of what it means to be a Christian"[2] In other words, being a pew or pious Christian is not enough; Christians are called to go beyond a personal relationship with Christ and share the good news of God's love and salvation with others.

As followers of Christ, we are all called not only to receive the teachings of Christ and embody His love but also to follow Christ and actively share His message with others. It is a call that requires a response. In *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich

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[1] All Bible verses taken from the New Revised Standard Version.

[2] Chris Byrley, "Discipleship," in *Lexham Theological Wordbook*, ed. Douglas Mangum et al., Lexham Bible Reference Series (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014).

Bonhoeffer notes, "The call goes forth, and it at once followed by the response of obedience. The disciples' response is an act of obedience, not a confession of faith in Jesus."[3] Bonhoeffer suggests the call to discipleship is "no need of any preliminaries, and no other consequence but obedience to the call."[4] Bonhoeffer's statement is relevant to discipleship as it is a wake-up call for Christians to examine their motives and understand that discipleship is not an add-on to our lives but the essence of our existence. Discipleship is a mantle that derives from faith, and disciples ought to exhibit that faith throughout the Christian journey.

In the annals of Christian faith, there are individuals whose legacies transcend time and leave an indelible in regard to discipleship. One such individual is the reformer John Calvin, whose teachings shaped Christian discipleship and discipleship-making. Calvin's unwavering commitment to the Gospel and his profound understanding of God's Word have inspired many to pursue a life of discipleship marked by genuine faith and transformative action. According to Tom Bloomer in "John Calvin in Geneva: Nation-Building Missionary," John Calvin was a leader in a Reformation movement that taught that the Bible must be the source of authority to shape every aspect of people's lives and the foundation of truth for entire communities and nations."[5] Gary Brumbelow notes, "It's

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[3] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 57.

[4] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 62.

[5] Tombloomer and Tombloomer, "John Calvin in Geneva: Nation-Building Missionary," *Tom Bloomer*, accessed December 7, 2023, https://tombloomer.com/2019/06/06/john-calvin-in-geneva-nation-building-missionary/.

clear that Calvin's discipling process went far beyond mere intellectual assent to doctrine; it encompasses a wholehearted commitment to follow Christ, live out His teachings, and make other disciples."[6]

This paper will introduce John Calvin and briefly overview his life, his role in the Protestant Reformation, and his theological contributions. It will then examine Calvin's theology and teachings and how he fulfilled the Great Commission in Geneva during the fourteenth century.

Additionally, there will be discussions of Calvin's achievements and unwavering commitment, which set him apart as he fostered a culture of discipleship. Also, the paper will briefly look at Calvin's view of the church as a community of disciples and will explore his ideas on the importance of church discipline, mutual accountability, and the cultivation of spiritual growth within the church context.

Furthermore, the question of what Calvin's understanding of intergenerational discipleship would look like today is still relevant, and as such, I will consider the relevance of Calvin's teachings in the modern world. In an age of rapid cultural change and shifting paradigms, discipleship remains as crucial as ever.

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[6] Gary Brumbelow, "John Calvin on Discipling the Nations," *Darrow Miller and Friends*, accessed December 7, 2023, https://darrowmillerandfriends.com/2013/11/04/john-calvin-discipling-nations/.

Who was John Calvin?

According to Michael Mullett in *John Calvin*, "John Calvin is one of the most influential figures in religious history. Sitting on the cusp of the medieval and early modern world, he was a prominent figure in the Reformation."[7] THL Parker, in "The Life and Times of John Calvin" provides some biography about Calvin:

> Calvin was born in Noyon, France, to Gérard Calvin and Jeanne le Franc and later matriculated to the Collège de Montaigu at the University of Paris. He studied law at the universities of Orléans and Bourges, and upon his father's death in 1531, Calvin returned to Paris to study the Bible, including Greek, Hebrew, and theology. In 1533, he experienced a conversion to Christianity. Parker believed, "for Calvin, the important thing was not when it happened or how it happened, but the change itself and the results of the change.[8]

The Essential Lexham Dictionary of Church History explains:

> Calvin grew sympathetic to the Reformation movement and the circumstances that precipitated what are known as his fugitive years. His friend, the new rector of the University of Paris, Nicolas Cop, gave an inaugural presentation on reform and the evangelical faith that brought controversy, causing Cop to flee the city. Calvin would also soon flee because of his connection to Cop. He was exiled in Basel in 1535 and the first part of 1536 and was also implicated in the Placard Controversy, in which placards criticizing the Catholic mass had been posted in various French cities.[9]

The Essential Lexham also notes that "When traveling through Geneva in 1536, he acquiesced to William Farel's insistence that he stay and help in the town that had

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[7] Michael Mullett, *John Calvin* (London: Routledge, 2011), 1, https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315542249

[8] T.H.L. Parker, "The Life and Times of John Calvin," in *Christian History Magazine-Issue 12: John Calvin: Reformer, Pastor, Theologian* (Worcester, PA: Christian History Institute, 1986).

[9] Andrew S. Ballitch, "Calvin, John," in *The Essential Lexham Dictionary of Church History*, ed. Michael A. G. Haykin (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022).

recently decided to pursue a course of reformation. Other than a few years of banishment in Strasbourg for a controversy over the Lord's Supper from 1538 to 1541, the remainder of Calvin's life and career was Intimately linked with Geneva."[10]

Calvin was a scholar who spoke Latin and excelled at philosophy. *Christianity Today* suggests, "he developed a taste for writing, and by age 22, he had published a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia*. Then, word of Luther's teaching reached France, and Calvin's life made an abrupt turn. He became marked out as a "Lutheran," and when persecution arose in Paris (where he had returned to teach), he sought refuge in Basel."[11] Herman Selderhuis explains, "In Calvin's conversion, he had found God—he would probably say that God found him, but the result is the same: Calvin became God's advocate. He would devote every minute of his life to the defense of God and his cause."[12] *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* writes, Calvin strongly believed that "Christians are renewed by the Spirit of God, renewed to be children of God, and a sign of this is that our physical desires no longer master us, but that the Spirit of God reigns in us, that we give evidence of our adoption, that we walk in the fear of God, holding to him as our Father and giving God the honor that is due him. That is the essence of what it means to

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[10] Andrew S. Ballitch, *The Essential Lexham Dictionary of Church History.*

[11] CMS Admin, "John Calvin," *Christianity Today*, accessed December 7, 2023, https://www.christianitytoday.com/2008/08/john-calvin/.

[12] Herman J. Selderhuis and Albert Gootjes, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 22.

be a Christian."[13] Thus, renewal is an act of the Spirit that provides the Christian strength to live a life of faith.

T. H. L. Parker states, "Calvin embarked on a journey of resilience and faith, seeking solace as a refugee in France, Germany, and Switzerland."[14] Amid these upheavals, it was providential that he encountered Martin Bucer, Strasbourg Reformer, who would later migrate to Cambridge where he would be a mentor to Cranmer during the brief but revolutionary English Reformation of King Edward VI. Yet, in the vibrant city of Basel, in the year 1536, at the tender age of only twenty-six, Calvin's intellectual brilliance burst forth, illuminating the world with the publication of his seminal work, *the Institutes of the Christian Religion*." Parker commends Calvin's work, noting that it was a "testament to his profound insights and unwavering devotion."[15] Calvin's work represented the whole sum of godliness and whatever is necessary to know about saving doctrine. Calvin later wrote, when he undertook the work, "All I had in mind was to hand on some elementary teaching by which anyone who had been touched by an interest in religion might be formed to true godliness. I labored at the task, especially for our own Frenchmen, for I saw that many were hungering and thirsting after Christ and yet that only a very few had any real knowledge of him."[16] The work explains an essential doctrine of the Christian Church, which contributes to the work of discipleship making.

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[13] Selderhuis and Gootjes, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life*, 21.

[14] Parker, "The Life and Times of John Calvin."

[15] Parker, "The Life and Times of John Calvin."

[16] Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, "Introduction," in *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 38.

Calvin's journey continued in Geneva, where William Farel, who advocated for Reformation, convinced Calvin to contribute his theology to the upcoming revolution. The city council took over its properties, and the religious environment changed. The council charged the city with an oath to be dedicated to living by God's law and divine Word while renouncing idolatry. During this change, laws were made, and commitments were given to give up worldly pleasures. During this time, Calvin emerged as the religious leader of a new religious order.

It was Calvin's goal to develop a catechism where disciples could learn the truth while being led and directed toward it. A student would learn a form of the articles of religion, those propositions that uphold the message of the Gospel, and would receive discipline if they disrupted communion. Geneva was happy to have John Calvin. And he, in turn, would dominate Christian thinking for many decades to come. Howard Frederic Vos writes, "Once a wandering soul, Calvin discovered his calling in the city of Geneva he had intended to pass through. The tapestry of his life, interwoven with the threads of divine providence and unwavering purpose, inspired by the zeal and commitment of its people, Calvin embraced his new home, dedicating himself to the arduous task of shepherding a reformed society, a society that would stand as a testament to the transformative power of faith, a beacon of hope amidst the turbulent waves of an ever-changing world."[17]

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[17] Howard Frederic Vos, Thomas Nelson Publishers, *Exploring Church History*, Nelson's Christian Cornerstone Series (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996).

Gary Brumbelow, in "John Calvin on Discipling the Nation," explains about Calvin's transformative impact:

> Through Calvin's discipling, the church would be restored to biblical purity in every aspect of society. Calvin believed that change began with knowledge, and he set out to teach the people of Geneva so they would know how to live according to God's Word. Calvin's influence did not stop at the individual level; he recognized the importance of equipping the authorities with the wisdom to govern justly and fairly. With Calvin's discipling methods, he inspired individuals to embrace their unique callings and to excel in their respective spheres. Whether as artisans, merchants, or scholars, Calvin encouraged them to embrace their work to glorify God and serve their fellow human beings. All would know how to work in their different spheres and hold accountability for individuals and the leadership in spheres of society so that the teachings would not be confined to theory but were lived out and applied in all areas of life.[18]

Bark Parsons also emphasizes the thrust of Calvin's emphasis on discipleship. He points out, "One of Calvin's immediate goals in Geneva was to establish a church that took seriously the claims of the Bible as to its form and government. This he did by establishing daily gatherings for psalm singing and expository preaching, monthly administrations of the Supper, and a church accessible to exercise its authority over matters of discipline without the influence of the civil authorities."[19]

Wilhelm H. Neuser supports what others have indicated about Calvin's work in Geneva, noting that Calvin established the Geneva Academy in 1559, which served as a "nursery" for Calvinist theology. Not only did it become a significant part of education within the Reformed church, but Calvin, along with others like Theodore Beza, taught thousands of notable students from Europe.[20]

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[18] Gary Brumbelow, "John Calvin on Discipling the Nations."

[19] Burk Parsons, Iain Harnish Murray, and Jay Edwards Adams, "Chapter 2," in *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, & Doxology* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust, 2008), 24.

It seems clear that John Calvin founded the Geneva Academy with the intention of creating a program that would train leaders and influence the community. Calvin designed a curriculum that encouraged spiritual development, discipline, and making and becoming a disciple in addition to imparting a theological understanding. Geneva Academy became recognized internationally as a place to become a mature disciple because of John Calvin's commitment to excellence. Students came from all over to become disciples and return to their homes and communities to influence others to be followers of Christ. The contributions of John Calvin still resonate in the Reformed denomination today. In essence, the heart of the Geneva Academy, according to Selderhuis and Gooties, "became the barracks where Reformed students from all over Europe were molded into theologians who were taught to preach with enthusiasm, establish congregations, and be faithful and diligent shepherds for the people."[21]

The Academy's commitment to excellence in education only solidified the notion that discipleship is about going above and beyond to instill a deep sense of purpose, integrity, and compassion in their students. Doing what they could to serve as models and guide students toward a life of discipleship.

Calvin wholeheartedly embraced the call to follow Jesus Christ and dedicated his life to spreading the good news and reforming the church through preaching, teaching, writing, and making disciples. *The Institute of the Christian Religion (Christianae Religionis Institutio)* is one of Calvin's notable works. According to an article by Christ

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[20] Wilhelm H. Neuser, "Calvin's Theology," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leiden, Netherlands: Wm. B. Eerdmans; Brill, 1999–2003), 330.

[21] Selderhuis and Gooties, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life*, 239.

Church Presbyterian, "the *Institutes* became the most renowned intellectual and influential theological contribution of the sixteenth-century Protestant Reformation."[22] The word *institutio* means instruction or education. "Calvin's purpose for writing the *Institutes* was to prepare and instruct candidates in sacred theology for the reading of the Bible so that they may be able both to have easy access to and to advance without stumbling."[23] John Calvin stated in the *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* "The work was designed both as a compendium of the doctrines of the Christian religion and as a confession offered to a persecuted king."[24] The Institutes was a resource for Christian teachings and assistance with discipleship training. Scholars and theologians were drawn to Calvin's writings, which gave them insights into Christian principles.

Sinclair Ferguson suggests, "Calvin also reflected on 'piety' as an awareness and his understanding of what it means to know Christ, to serve God, and to live in the power of the Spirit. Calvin writes, 'piety is an expression of adoption—reverence for God, living with a single eye to His glory. This is what the children of God are called to do and to be.'"[25] Ferguson attests to how Calvin's work fundamentally underscores the notion of discipleship.

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[22] Christ Church Presbyterian, "Calvin's Institutes: A Brief Introduction," *Christ Church Presbyterian: Mount Pleasant, SC*, accessed December 14, 2023, https://www.christchurchcharleston.org/blog/post/calvins-institutes:-a-brief-introduction.

[23] Christ Church Presbyterian: Mount Pleasant, SC.

[24] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), xxxiii.

[25] Sinclair B. Ferguson, "Chapter 3: Calvin's Heart For God," in *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, and Doxology*, ed. Burk Parsons (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), 34.

Additionally, in *The Meanings of Discipleship*, Andrew Hayes and Stephen Cherry argue, "John Calvin frames his understanding of discipleship in the larger context of what he calls a pious and holy life … Calvin distinguishes his understanding of discipleship as a life of pity and holiness from Roman Catholic monasticism on the one hand, and the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century on the other."[26] It is fair to say that Calvin believed Christians owe their whole lives to God, calling all Christians, by the way of life set forth by Christ in the Gospel, "to deny themselves and bear their cross" (Matthew 16:24).

Therefore, presented and provided to Christians in Calvin's literature are insights into what it truly means to follow Christ and embrace a lifelong journey of growth, transformation, and discipleship. The Church today may not use the same methodology as Calvin did; however, this does not mean that we should do as we please. As Andrew Hayes insists, "We are mutually accountable as fellow followers of Christ trying to find the pathway to discipleship together."[27] Calvin brings us back to the fact that discipleship is not an isolated endeavor but a community in a collective effort to go and serve our neighbors, show compassion, and be agents of positive change in our communities.

In its day, the sixteenth-century Institute of the Christian Religion served as a beacon of light for Christians on their journey to discipleship. The readings show that through his emphasis on discipleship in his teachings, writings, and theology, John Calvin changed the course of the Christian church and widened the scope of its trajectory.

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[26] Andrew Hayes and Stephen Cherry, *The Meanings of Discipleship: Being Disciples Then and Now* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2022), 68.

[27] Hayes, *The Meanings of Discipleship: Being Disciples Then and Now*, 32.

The Institute of the Christian Religion gives disciples a road map that will give direction to practical teachings for living a life dedicated to Christ, where Christian faith functions as a vehicle of transformation.

Can John Calvin Be Relevant to A Discipleship Program?

Despite many questions about the relevance of a prominent 16th-century theologian, John Calvin, and his process of being relevant for an intergenerational discipleship program, the significance of his methodology is warranted. Between the 16th and the 21st centuries, our global community is fast-paced and ever-changing, and it is easy to overlook John Calvin's contributions and dismiss his relevance to our modern lives. However, regarding intergenerational discipleship, Calvin's impact on our lives today still resonates.

Calvin dedicated his life to understanding and spreading the gospel message. His teachings on discipleship were not exclusively theological abstractions but practical guidelines for living a life of faith, discipleship, and obedience to God. According to John Calvin, "It is in obedience to Scripture that God's image is restored in us. Scripture first instructs us in the law to love righteousness because, by nature, we are not inclined to do so. Second, Scripture provides us with a guiding principle, namely, God's words to us: 'You shall be holy, for I am holy.'"[28] Part of being a disciple is pursuing obedience to Christ. Being obedient to Christ is one of the principles of the Christian faith that lives out one's belief in one's relationship with God. Having a personal connection with Christ

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[28] Jerry Bridges, "Chapter 18: The True Christian Life," in *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, and Doxology*, ed. Burk Parsons (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), 222.

in prayer, Scripture study, corporate and individual worship, and engagement with each other will lead to spiritual transformation.

Looking at discipleship from an intergenerational perspective will promote the transformation needed. Together, participants will collaborate and be empowered to look beyond the surface and pursue a relationship with Christ and with one other. By building upon John Calvin's contributions to discipleship, we will impact the church, communities, and the world around us.

In the book *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life* by Herman and Gootjes, they note that "Calvin wanted his only ambition to be God's cause, and in the last years of his life, this was the cause with which he continued to be occupied and in which he continued to find success. Calvin's influence was immense and was reflected in numerous biblical commentaries, letters, treatises, and the *Institutes*. It is noted that in death, as in life, his priority was never to point to himself but to Christ, his redeemer."[29] It is clear that one of Calvin's fundamental aims in his work was to promote and encourage discipleship.

Conclusion

While Calvin's discipleship principles remain timeless, the methods we adopt must be adapted to suit the needs and challenges of the New Hope Baptist Church (NHBC) context and the advancements of the modern-day world.

John Calvin had a profound influence on Christian discipleship. His contributions continue to shape how Christians understand and live out their faith. In this regard, John

[29] Selderhuis and Gootjes, *John Calvin: A Pilgrim's Life*, 236.

Calvin's methodology can be seen as a framework and foundation for an anticipated intergenerational discipleship program.

First and foremost, Calvin stressed the significance of personal relationships with Christ. For Calvin, discipleship is about learning and cultivating a revolutionary relationship with God. Placing God at the center of one's discipleship journey will provide a solid foundation for discipleship growth.

Calvin also emphasized Christians living by the authority of Scripture. He believed the Bible was Christians' ultimate source of truth and guidance. Parsons writes, "The entirety of Calvin's ministry was established fundamentally on the Word of God. According to Calvin, we are to be 'daily taught in the school of Jesus Christ. Thus, we must be students of Scripture if we are to possess right and sound doctrine: Now, so that true religion may shine upon us, we ought to hold that it must take its beginning from heavenly doctrine and that no one can even get the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless he is a pupil of Scripture.'"[30] So, by grounding an intergenerational discipleship program in the study and application of the Bible, we can ensure that discipleship growth is rooted in a solid foundation. John Calvin's approach allows an intergenerational discipleship program to appreciate growth and the Great Commission.

The importance that Calvin placed on the role of the Holy Spirit is essential for Christians and any intergenerational discipleship program. The Holy Spirit is the sole person who will transform the work within the disciple. By recognizing the Holy Spirit as the disciple's transformer, helper, and guide, the disciple can embark on an

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[30] Burk Parsons, "Chapter 1: The Humility of Calvin's Calvinism," in *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, and Doxology*, 4–5.

intergenerational discipleship program that God empowers and leads. Michael A. G. Haykin explains, "Calvin encourages all his followers to seek positive ways in which they could be used by the indwelling Spirit to impact society in general and reform it, and so advance the kingdom of Christ."[31] An intergenerational discipleship program that relies on the Holy Spirit is not self-driven but ensures a surrender to God's transformative power. It is a transformative power that will help the believer to actively partner with God in transforming the world.

An African proverb states, "If you want to go fast, go alone; if you want to go far, go together."[32] The truth here is that, as Christians, we need each other. Calvin affirms in *The Institute of the Christian Religion* that community is the heart and soul of a multitude of believers as one. Calvin writes about believers, "If truly convinced that God is the common Father of all and Christ the common Head, being united in brotherly love, they cannot but share their benefits with one another."[33] Calvin fostered community in Geneva through education. He believed that an educated society was crucial for moral and spiritual development. He established the Academy of Geneva with those thoughts in mind. The Academy of Geneva became an institution of learning. In an intergenerational discipleship program, the importance of community aligns with the concept of being and making disciples.

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[31] Michael A. G. Haykin and C. Jeffrey Robinson Sr., *To the Ends of the Earth: Calvin's Missional Vision and Legacy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014), 54.

[32] African Proverb.

[33] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*, 1015.

Discipleship should not be lived in isolation but in fellowship with other disciples, being part of something larger than themselves. Disciples connected in community will thrive in a space that will bring them together to nurture and grow. Fostering community within an intergenerational discipleship program creates space for mutual support, accountability, love, and fellowship.

Lastly, Calvin taught how stewardship and service provide a practical structure for discipleship. He believed Christians are called to use their talents, resources, and time to serve others and advance God's kingdom. In the *Institute of the Christian Religion*, Calvin notes, "We are instructed to remember that those talents which God has bestowed upon us are not our own goods but the free gifts of God; and any persons who become proud of them show their ungratefulness. Who causes you to excel? Paul asks, 'If you have received all things, why do you boast as if they were not given to you?'"[34] By incorporating opportunities for disciples to engage in acts of service, an intergenerational discipleship program will encourage them to live out their faith practically, particularly to those in need. One's active service helps develop a heart of compassion and generosity while witnessing one's spiritual formation in action.

The entirety of Calvin's ministry was a combination of intentionality, commitment, prayer, and understanding of Jesus's instructions, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:19-20). Calvin's journey required the guidance of the Holy Spirit and his disciples' dedication. Many

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[34] Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*, 694.

themes shaped Calvin's theology and leadership, such as "God's sovereignty, the authority of Scripture, the role of the Holy Spirit, the importance of community, and the call to service."[35] All you can find encapsulated in his magnum opus *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. Calvin believed that every person has a unique purpose, a call to action, and the potential to make a difference in the world as a disciple. Calvin's practices laid the groundwork for being a disciple and making disciples. As we navigate implementing an intergenerational discipleship program, the program can adopt Calvin's methodology and emulate some of his examples.

Another part of John Calvin's methodology is prayer. The intergenerational discipleship program can prioritize prayer, allowing the Holy Spirit to be present and to direct all sessions. Calvin attests that "Prayer is the outpouring of the soul, the deepest root of piety, and the bedrock of assurance. It is the most important part of the Christian life, the lifeblood of every true believer."[36] Calvin saw prayer as undergirding every aspect and area of the Christian life.

As we implement biblical principles and practices, we realize that in this digital age, we must prioritize how we connect and foster relationships with the participants of the intergenerational discipleship program. Technology will be a powerful and resourceful tool in creating an intergenerational discipleship program. We can use lessons, podcasts, live webinars, journaling, and video conferences to present the

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[35] Calvin, *Institution of The Christian Religion.*

[36] Joel R. Beeke, "Chapter 19: The Communion of Men With God," in *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, and Doxology*, ed. Burk Parsons (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), 232.

program. Throughout the lesson, the program will be interactive, allowing students to use these learning and communication tools.

Having history on our side means we have examples from the past that support our beliefs and actions. As we have witnessed throughout our exploration of John Calvin, we have discovered through history that discipleship is not merely a religious obligation, practice, or set of rules to be followed. It is a life-altering calling made by Jesus Christ. However, NHBC intergeneration has uncertainties in bridging the gap in our context. On the other hand, being intentional and implementing a discipleship program with disciples that bridges the gap is about giving individuals the tools to go forth and share the gospel with others in and outside of their generation. Jesus called all disciples to serve as catalysts and vessels of transformation for other people's growth. By doing this, we create disciples who develop more disciples, continuing a cycle of development and transformation.

Finally, John Calvin was a well-known Protestant theologian who made significant contributions in the area of making disciples. Calvin used a framework based on biblical principles. Similarly, developing an intergenerational discipleship project that utilizes some of Calvin's concepts will help empower and transform individuals, churches, communities, and the world.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

Pneumatology, the theological study of the Holy Spirit, will inform my doctoral project by laying the biblical foundation for the person and work of the Spirit and by also giving disciples tools that will help them foster dependency on the Holy Spirit's leading and guiding for the ministry's growth, and maturing disciples to fulfill the Great Commission mandated by Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20 which states, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you."

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity sent by the Father and Son as a source of strength to the disciples. Wilson Varkey writes in *The Role of the Holy Spirit in Protestant Systematic Theology: A Comparative Study of Karl Barth, Jurgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg* that "pneumatology is the study of the entity of the Spirit in response to its being, its position in the Trinity, and the role it plays in the divine blueprint in relation to the human beings and the rest of the world. As a result, pneumatology is nothing other than the confession of the Christian faith and elucidation of the experience of our encounter with the person and work of the Holy Spirit."[1] In

[1] Wilson Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit in Protestant Systematic Theology: A Comparative Study of Karl Barth, Jürgen Moltmann, and Wolfhart Pannenberg* (Cumbria: Langham Monographs, 2011), 3.

explaining the person, work and function of the Holy Spirit, many scholars and Bible students have referred to Varkey's definition of pneumatology because it highlights the importance of the "personality" or "personhood" of "the Holy Spirit and His role in empowering and gift-giving action"[2] in the life of the disciple. Having the Holy Spirit is having a personal encounter with Jesus Christ. It embodies that part of Matthew 28 that says, "…baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit…" By confessing the Christian faith through the Holy Spirit, the disciple is aware and understands that the Holy Spirit is present in the act of discipling and discipleship, transforming, enlightening, empowering and guiding the disciples to be followers in the teaching of Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit is still alive and active, but discipleship among certain generations at local churches has not been significantly evident. For example, the New Hope Baptist Church consists of several generations of worshippers. There is the Silent Generation (1925-1945), ages 79-96; the Boomers (1946-1964), ages 60-78; and millennials (1981-1996), ages 28-43.[3] However, the problem is that a trend has developed in recent years where millennials have been coming to church. Still, most have not stayed after indicating they would become a church disciple, and even after formally joining and participating in informational discipleship classes. The discipleship classes explain the church's covenant, constitution, and ministries and provide questions and answers about

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[2] Varkey, *Role of the Holy Spirit in Protestant Systematic Theology,* 3.

[3] Darrell Eryx Hall, *Speaking across Generations: Messages That Satisfy Boomers, Xers, Millennials, Gen Z, and Beyond* (Downers Grove, Il: IVP Books, 2022).

the church and ministry in general. Most millennials would disappear after their first communion and an extended right hand of fellowship. This is what *Christianity Today* means when it talks about the "invisible back door" of the Church.[4]

If the church desires to survive and thrive, there should be intentionality about not only compelling the next generation to come but also empowering these individuals to become disciples. The hypothesis is that the infusion of a seven-week comprehensive discipleship program will give more than contextual processes but expand, empower, and equip millennials to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20), God's purpose in their lives, the church, and the world.

As such, given commission of Jesus and the seeming spiritual apathy of confessing believers who exit through the church's "invisible back door" before completing the church's discipleship process, a critical question arises: "How does the Holy Spirit empower and guide disciples in their spiritual growth and transformation journey as disciples of Jesus Christ?" Understanding the work of the Holy Spirit in this enterprise is important; therefore, the study of pneumatology will be the groundwork to guide, empower, and help strengthen the disciples' faith and commitment to the church and the world. They would be equipped to become mature disciples and fulfill the Great Commission as Jesus commanded.

Examining the theological theme of pneumatology, *A Biblical Theology of Christian Discipleship* by Johnny Turner suggests, "A fruitful church will grow when the

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[4] CMS Admin, "The Church's Back Door: Why They Come and Go," *Christianity Today*, accessed August 29, 2024, https://www.christianitytoday.com/1963/03/churchs-back-door-why-they-come-and-go/.

harvest is abundant for righteousness."[5] Turner emphasizes that growing healthy disciples is the answer to church growth. So, we will explore how the Holy Spirit will produce the disciples through the Fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23) that nurtures and matures all Christians and those we disciple. Following Jesus in precept and example without the Holy Spirit is impossible.

In disciple-making, we will discuss how the Holy Spirit empowers Christians to rely on the Holy Spirit's presence to impact the lives of others. With this assertion, the person of the Holy Spirit carries out Christ's work in the Christian to be a disciple and make disciples.

This paper will discuss how, as followers of Christ, the Holy Spirit transforms Christians into the image of Christ. This paper will explore how the Holy Spirit renews our minds, so Christians "may prove what is that good, acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). Discipleship engages the work of the Spirit to bring about lasting change in our lives. In *Strategic Disciplemaking: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry,* Aubrey Malphurs states that "Paul makes it crystal clear that God the Holy Spirit is the one who is in the transformation business, not believers … as the Holy Spirit is progressively transforming us into Christ's likeness, we show forth the fruit of the Spirit in our lives."[6] In the book *The Holy Spirit: Works & Gifts,* Boesch also writes,

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[5] Johnny Turner, *Biblical Theology of Christian Discipleship* (S.l.: WIPF AND STOCK, 2021), 86.

[6] Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Successful Ministry* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 39-40.

"When the Spirit regenerates us, he enters into us and makes his abode within us. He convicts us of sin and empowers us to believe and obey."[7] Specifically, the Holy Spirit regenerates the disciple's heart and creates a new nature in them. The goal is to be more and more like Jesus. Dave Early and Rod Dempsey note, "When we gaze into the face of Jesus and see the glory of the Lord, a process of transformation takes place."[8]

We will further discuss how the Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to Christians for the common good of the body of Christ and for effective disciple-making within serving the church and loving others. Charles Stanley states, "Spiritual gifts are manifestations of the Holy Spirit.[9] Stanley discusses in his book, *The Spirit-Filled Life: Discover the Joy of Surrendering to the Holy Spirit,* that spiritual gifts are for the building up of the body of Christ. Stanley explains, "When a man or woman with the gift of giving pays another believer's electric bill, it is God's grace. When a pastor gifted as an exhorter stands to deliver a message, it is God's grace to the people. When a believer with the gift of service gives time to meet a need, it is God's grace in action. In these instances, Jesus is at work through His body. It is more than a matter of people being nice. It is Christ manifest on earth,"[10] which says all disciples are called to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

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[7] Donald G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit: Works & Gifts* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 287.

[8] Dave Earley and Rod Dempsey, *Spiritual Formation Is...,* 7.

[9] Charles F. Stanley, *The Spirit-Filled Life: Discover the Joy of Surrendering to the Holy Spirit* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2014).

[10] Stanley, *The Spirit-Filled Life*.

The Holy Spirit will empower, guide, and transform the disciples into the image of Christ, shaping and directing them to live out their faith that will reflect Matthew 28:18-20, "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Why Pneumatology (Holy Spirit)?

It has already been noted that studying the Holy Spirit is essential to knowing God or having a personal relationship with God. Based on this understanding, the Holy Spirit is engaged in the spiritual formation of all disciples by guiding and empowering disciples to reflect the image of Christ as in Ephesians 4:11-13, emphasizing that we all be "equipped for ministry… for building up the body of Christ… and grow until we reach maturity… measured of the full stature of Christ." Spiritual development is an ongoing process for the old and the young to receive God's grace and be transformed into Christ's followers. Jesus said in John 14:26, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you." The Spirit is behind the work of transformation in the believer.

Furthermore, the C. S. Lewis Institute states, "In terms of discipleship, the Holy Spirit, as his name implies, works to make people holy. He brings God's people to salvation in Christ, conforms them to his likeness, and sends them out into the world in

ministry. This covers the full spectrum of our life in this world."[11] John the Baptist declared, "I baptize you with water for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is more powerful than I, and I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). Both C. S. Lewis and John the Baptist agree that the presence of the Holy Spirit will do the work in the disciple and serve the disciple well in his/her spiritual development.

The Holy Spirit Empowers

In *The Complete Book of Discipleship,* Bill Hull suggests, "Being filled and empowered with the Spirit speaks to the intention of our hearts. It gives us the desire to be trained. But desire doesn't do the training."[12] This statement describes the importance of being empowered by the Holy Spirit, which ignites the disciples' desires, passions, and gifts for the Great Commission. The understanding is that desires, passions, and gifts are insufficient to accomplish the Great Commission. The Holy Spirit empowers disciples to do what is needed to perform ministry. For John Calvin, the primary purpose of the Holy Spirit is to engraft us into the body of Christ.[13] Donald Bloesch suggests that Calvin declares "that the Spirit was also given to demonstrate the power of Christ by some

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[11] "Finding Power to Live a New Life: Discipleship and the Holy Spirit," *C.S. Lewis Institute*, accessed March 30, 2024, https://www.cslewisinstitute.org/resources/finding-power-to-live-a-new-life-discipleship-and-the-holy-spirit/.

[12] Hull, *The Complete Book of Discipleship*, 195.

[13] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, two vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), 3.1.1 (1:538).

visible gift."[14] Everything we need to follow Christ, be like Christ, witness for Christ, and do what Christ did is in the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, according to *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life,* Billy Graham writes, "Any gift we may have will never be used to its fullest potential for God unless it is brought under the control of, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.[15] Billy Graham argues that Spirit-filled, Spirit-led, and Spirit-empowered disciples can or will positively impact our desperate or despairing world. By being empowered and yielded to the Holy Spirit, gifts are enhanced to glorify God and used for God's purposes. Graham further states, "We must make ourselves available to the Holy Spirit so that when He fills us, we will become vessels of blessing to the world…[16] Stephen Seamands asserts that the ministry we have entered is the ministry of Jesus Christ the Son, to the glory of God the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit, for the sake of the church and the world.[17] The Holy Spirit empowers disciples to follow the teachings and continue Jesus Christ's work. Disciples cannot work alone in self-centeredness but are called to allow the Holy Spirit to empower their walk, bringing glory to God.

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[14] Bloesch, *The Holy Spiriter* 101.

[15] Billy Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 119.

[16] Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life*, 119.

[17] Deborah A. Colwill, "Developing Emerging Missional Leaders: No Greater Joy," in *Formation for Mission: Discipleship and Identity for Emerging Adults*, ed. Mary T. Lederleitner, Andrew MacDonald, and Rick Richardson (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2022), 95.

The Holy Spirit Transforms

A disciple must allow the Holy Spirit to transform his/her life. According to Jim L. Wilson, "Transformation is impossible outside of God's empowering work. This indicates a work that happens inside the disciple brought about by an outside force. In this case, the outside force is the Holy Spirit doing the transformation."[18] II Corinthians 3:18 further states, "And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit." *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* points out that the use of the word "transformed" is the action of the Holy Spirit and is dependent upon an internal process, the renewal of your mind."[19] In simpler terms, transformation is the process by which the Holy Spirit changes the disciple's mind or thoughts, leading to a mature life in discipleship. This idea of transformation in the mind is a concept that involves the influence of the Holy Spirit to change or renew the disciple's thoughts and actions.

Roy E. Gingrich argues, according to Romans 6:16–23, that we are either servants of sin (the sinful nature) or servants of righteousness (the righteous nature imparted to a disciple through the indwelling Holy Spirit).[20] Gingrich explains that disciples have

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[18] Jim L. Wilson, *Pastoral Ministry in the Real World: Loving, Teaching, and Leading God's People* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016), 102.

[19] J. W. Simpson Jr., "Transform," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Revised*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1979–1988), 889.

[20] Roy E. Gingrich, *The Duties of a Christian* (Memphis, TN: Riverside Printing, 2002), 3.

duties toward God. And one of the duties is to "be ye transformed (metamorphosed) by the renewing of our minds." Gingrich states, "We are henceforth, from the time of our conversion, to think like, talk like, and walk like Christ."[21] The way to do this is to allow the Holy Spirit to transform and renew the mind. Ephesians 4:23 states, "to be renewed in the spirit of your minds." The disciple's mind is transformed through the spiritual disciplines of prayer, preaching, teaching, repentance, fasting, worship, fellowship, and Bible reading. When the Holy Spirit transforms the mind, disciples are changed into the image of Christ. If the Holy Spirit transforms the disciple's minds, the disciple will live out Romans 12:2, "approve the will of God as being good, acceptable (to God), and perfect (complete, with no need for addition or subtraction)."[22]

In *Spiritual Formation from the Inside Out,* Hull argues, "Transformation begins in that part of the immaterial nature called the mind. This is definitive because it comes from a direct statement of fact– "Do not be conformed to this world *but be transformed by the renewal of your mind*, that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."[23] Hull's argument is determined or influenced by the Holy Spirit placing "a visceral hunger along with a desire to please"[24] on the inside of the

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[21] Gingrich, *The Duties of a Christian*, 6.

[22] Gingrich, *The Duties of a Christian*, 7.

[23] Hull, *Spiritual Formation from the Inside Out*, 115.

[24] Hull, *Spiritual Formation from the Inside Out*, 115.

disciple to please God. The Holy Spirit works in the disciple and gives the disciple the desire to surrender to a life that transforms the mind.

The Holy Spirit Imparts Spiritual Gifts

The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts to disciples for the upbuilding of the body of Christ. The growth and development of the body of Christ are dependent upon individual disciples employing the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In that way, the discipling of individual members of the body of Christ, as guided by the Holy Spirit, helps the body of Christ at large to function at its fullest potential. When individual members of the body of Christ are discipled, it contributes to the healthy functioning of the body of Christ. Conversely, when individual members are not discipled, then the body of Christ is at risk for disease. Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave argue, "It was to be expected that special spiritual enablement would be provided in order that the Church might carry out the Divine mission committed to her by the Lord Jesus Christ."[25] Duffield and Van Cleave refer to Jesus's instructions, given to the disciples in the Great Commission. Then, in Acts 2:2-4, the Holy Spirit was poured on the disciples as promised.

The Holy Spirit empowers disciples to live out God's purposes and what God requires them to do. II Peter 1:3 states, "His divine power has given us everything needed for life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence." Peter's words mean that the impartation of spiritual gifts by the Holy Spirit is what disciples need to accomplish the Great Commission and God's plans for the

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[25] Guy P. Duffield and Nathaniel M. Van Cleave, *Foundations of Pentecostal Theology* (Los Angeles, CA: L.I.F.E. Bible College, 1983), 327.

disciples' lives. The following are just a few of the spiritual gifts that the Holy Spirit imparts: the gift of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing miracles, prophecy, discerning spirits, tongues, interpreting tongues, administration, and help. The Holy Spirit imparts spiritual gifts in the disciples' lives to nourish, grow, mature, and illuminate themselves and their community.

The Holy Spirit Works through the Fruit of the Spirit

As Galatians 5:22-23 outlines, the fruit of the Spirit consists of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. In the book *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life,* Billy Graham explains, "Unlike the gifts of the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit is not divided among believers. Instead, all Christians should be marked by all the fruit of the Spirit. The fruit of the Spirit is God's expectation in our lives."[26] For clarity's sake, being marked by the fruit of the Spirit is the expectation that disciples should exemplify qualities that describe godly virtues produced by the work of the Holy Spirit.

The gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit differ in principle. The gifts of the Spirit are imparted among disciples in different ways and for various purposes. In contrast, the fruit of the Spirit refers to graces that should be evident in the life of every disciple. The fruit of the Spirit is what the Holy Spirit imparts and displays in the life of a disciple. When a disciple allows the fruit of the Spirit (love, joy, peace, patience,

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[26] Graham, *The Holy Spirit: Activating God's Power in Your Life*, 239.

kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control)[27] to work, others can see the evidence in his actions.

Why? In short: (1) love is selfless and seeks the well-being of others; (2) joy is contentment that is not dependent on circumstances; (3) peace comes from the Holy Spirit that "surpasses all understanding;" (4) patience is the ability to endure struggles trusting God's timing and plan; (5) kindness is being considerate and compassionate towards others; (6) goodness is the spirit of excellence in morality; (7) faithfulness is being reliable and trustworthy in our relationship with God and others; (8) gentleness is humble and meek attitude; and (9) self-control is the ability to hold restraint allowing the Holy Spirit to take over actions. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, these attributes are transformative works of God in the life of a disciple. Ultimately, disciples are to reflect Jesus's character and bear fruit consistent with the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit Regenerates and Sanctifies

There are several essential Articles of Faith that the New Hope Baptist Church upholds; however, there are two that are worth mentioning when talking about the Holy Spirit, (1) Article VII– "We believe that the Scriptures teach that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith, and newness of life;" and (2) Article X– "We believe the Scriptures

[27] Galatians 5:22-23.

teach that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means especially the word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchful-ness, and prayer." [28]

Both Articles of Faith are tied to the Holy Spirit. According to the *Lexham Survey of Theology*, "Regeneration is the divine action by which God renews the fallen creation to reflect his character."[29] Colijin and her colleagues further write, "For human beings, regeneration is the answer to the corruption of moral character caused by sin. It is essential for participation in the kingdom of God (John 3:3). At conversion, God grants the believer new life and a new identity in Christ. This event is so powerful that John refers to it as a new birth, a birth "from above" (John 3:3), while Paul refers to it as a "new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). In either case, the change is brought about by the Holy Spirit, who comes to indwell the believer."[30] A disciple can understand this as the Holy Spirit renewing the disciple's heart and mind to convict of sin and bring about transformation to live a new life in Jesus Christ.

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[28] *The New National Baptist Hymnal: An Inspiring Hymnal That Is a Virtual Choir Library Containing Hymns, Spirituals, Scriptural Readings, Songs for Children and Youth, Offertories, Benedictions, Music for Special Occasions, and Much More* (Nashville, TN: National Baptist Pub. Board, 1977).

[29] Brenda B. Colijn, "Regeneration," in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

[30] Colijn. Regeneration.

In the *Lexham Survey of Theology,* Susan Calhoun suggests, "Sanctification is the ongoing supernatural work of God to rescue justified sinners from the disease of sin and to conform them to the image of his Son: holy, Christlike, and empowered to do good works."[31] In other words, sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit. The relationship between the Holy Spirit and sanctification sets the disciples apart for the continuous process of being made holy and righteous. Romans 8:13 says, "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."

Therefore, God calls disciples to allow the Holy Spirit to sanctify and to put sin to death. Proverbs 30:12 says, "There are those who are pure in their own eyes yet are not cleansed of their filthiness," therefore, sanctification is needed. This seems to suggest that some are clean in their own eyes and not clean of their filthiness. The Holy Spirit leads, guides, and reminds disciples to self-reflect, looking to the Holy Spirit within for sanctification.

Conclusion

The study of the Holy Spirit (pneumatology) is foundational for an intergenerational discipleship program because the Holy Spirit is an active presence that empowers disciples to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). The Holy Spirit is more than a theological foundation of thoughts, concepts, and ideas; He is a powerful source that moves and works in the hearts and minds of disciples. Making disciples

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[31] Susanne Calhoun, "Sanctification," in *Lexham Survey of Theology*, ed. Mark Ward et al. (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2018).

happens through the power of the Holy Spirit. Throughout this paper, we talked about how important it is for disciples to be empowered and equipped by the Holy Spirit, leading them, guiding them, and transforming them to be like Christ and to do as Christ did. Transformation does not occur through the will of a believer. A disciple should be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit so discipleship can be carried out through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is foundational to an intergenerational discipleship program because the Holy Spirit will equip disciples with gifts and abilities to serve God and others and build up the body of Christ. Romans 12:1-2 states, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, based on God's mercy, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable act of worship. Do not be conformed to this age, but be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." In other words, when disciples give up their desires, the Holy Spirit activates, and they begin serving God. God calls disciples to serve God and gives them the passions, dreams, and gifts they need to do the work purposefully. The Holy Spirit helps disciples experience transforming ways of putting their faith into action, making other disciples, and impacting the church and community. The Holy Spirit needs to be in charge, with less human effort, to bring about permanent change.

In addition, the Holy Spirit is the process of regeneration. In the article, *Calvin on Regeneration from His Commentary on John,* John Calvin argues, "The illumination of our minds by the Holy Spirit belongs to our renewal, and thus faith flows from regeneration as from its source; but since it is by the same faith that we receive Christ,

who sanctifies us by his Spirit, on account of it is said to be the beginning of our adoption."[32] In essence, the Spirit's rebirth of a disciple is the work of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and illumination; no human effort plays a part in the process. Therefore, disciples must submit themselves and give all the glory to God. Moreover, the New Hope Baptist Church's Covenant embodies the reflection and actions of the Holy Spirit, which partly states,

> …We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to give it a place in our affections, prayers, and services above every organization of human origin; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrine; to contribute cheerfully and regularly, as God has prospered us, towards its expenses, for the support of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, the relief of the poor and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world…

A church covenant is a statement of shared responsibilities that the church community agrees to uphold. The Holy Spirit guides and empowers that community's disciples to live out the responsibilities outlined in the covenant. The covenant leans on the Holy Spirit to work in the disciples' hearts and minds to witness the unity and love of God present in the body of Christ.

Furthermore, according to James Dunn, "One cannot know Jesus apart from the Holy Spirit or other than through the Spirit. One cannot experience the Holy Spirit other than as that of power which bears the character of Christ and impresses that character on those who submit to it." Therefore, the intergenerational discipleship program will be

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[32] John Calvin, "Calvin on Regeneration from His Commentary on John," *Calvin on Regeneration from His Commentary on John*, accessed April 1, 2024, https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/calvinregeneration.html.

worthwhile with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will give guidance, leadership, direction, and empowerment to the disciples. The Holy Spirit is needed to conform the disciples to Christ's image. The Holy Spirit's involvement will renew the mind and cultivate the fruit of the Spirit, and disciples will carry out Jesus 'command "to go, make disciples, baptize, and teaching them to observe all things" (Matthew 28:19).

Upon reflection, the heart of this paper revolves around Matthew 28:18-20, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." The Great Commission drives this discipleship program with the Holy Spirit at its foundation. The discipleship program will depend on and rely on the Holy Spirit to transform lives and impact the church, community, and the world. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would instruct and teach us "all things" and remind us of "all things" He has said (John 14:26).

In his book, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit,* Arthur T. Pierson writes, "The Spirit of God, the Paraclete, is to be to the disciple and to the church all that Christ would have been had he tarried among us and been the personal companion and counselor of each and all."[33] In other words, the Holy Spirit is to the modern-day disciple as Jesus was to His disciples during his earthly ministry. The Holy Spirit comes alongside the disciple to be the advocate or direct link to comfort, lead, guide, and support the disciple.

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[33] Arthur T. Pierson, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* (New York; Chicago; Toronto: Fleming H. Revell, 1895), 19.

Pierson explains, "And by the Spirit of God working in and through the believer and the church, believers are, in their measure, to be to the world what the Spirit is to them."[34] Pierson's statement highlights that the Holy Spirit equips and empowers Christians to demonstrate the attributes and characteristics of the Holy Spirit that embody them, and they are expected to do the same in interaction with others, the community, and the world.

[34] Pierson, *The Acts of the Holy Spirit*, 19.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTERDISCIPLINARY FOUNDATIONS

The interdisciplinary foundation will examine and engage the pedagogical theory of identity formation. Defining the terms "pedagogy" and "identity formation" is crucial to this doctoral project. According to the *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, "pedagogy" refers to the "Art, science, practice, or profession of teaching, especially systemized learning or instruction in principles and methods of teaching."[1] Michael Anthony further states, "Ideally, a pedagogy emerges from educational philosophy, guiding professional preparation and practice."[2] Anthony's statement suggests the central focus of pedagogy in a doctoral project refers to guiding teaching methods, practices, theories, and perspectives in an intergenerational discipleship process. Moreover, identity formation as a pedagogical theory is essential to discipleship.

Furthermore, Cairney and Hart explain in, *Pedagogy and Education for Life: A Christian Reframing of Teaching, Learning, and Formation,* "It is a pedagogy that reflects and is interwoven into the daily life of any community, a pedagogy that will see

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[1] Michael J. Anthony et al., *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 528.

[2] Michael, *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, 528.

their classes, schools, and students transformed, for the Bible's central message is about our transformation in and through Christ."[3] In some sense, our identities are not just determined by what we learn. Our identities are determined by how we live. It is within a shared community and interactions that our characters are shaped. As such, the process through which people comprehend who they are as disciples—including their views, values, and attitudes—is known as identity formation. It entails investigating and developing a distinct and cohesive self-concept that directs actions, choices, and social relationships.

Erik Erikson is a pivotal figure in psychological history who is often considered the father of the developmental model known as identity formation theorizes how human growth and change occur from infancy to late-stage adulthood. The term identity formation is a comprehensive understanding where "Erikson explains that it is a standard or acceptable developmental process for adolescents and young adults with developmentally appropriate pedagogy."[4] Nancy Hoose writes in her article, "Identity Development Theory," in *Lumen Adolescent Psychology*, "Identity development is vital to a person's understanding of self and participation in their social systems."[5] This theory is used in age developmental stages, specifically childhood and adolescence, but can also be applied to stages of faith. Therefore, when considering being or becoming a disciple,

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[3] Trevor H. Cairney and Trevor Hart, *Pedagogy and Education for Life: A Christian Reframing of Teaching, Learning, and Formation* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018).

[4] Lederleitner, MacDonald, and Richardson, "The Role of Identity Formation," 17.

[5] Nicole Arduini-Van Hoose, "Adolescent Psychology," *Lumen*, accessed January 18, 2024, https://courses.lumenlearning.com/adolescent/chapter/identity-development-theory/.

one needs to recognize the importance of identity formation and that, in pedagogy, identity formation involves shaping beliefs, values, and a sense of self as a disciple. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology* describes using transformative pedagogical approaches:

> By using transformative Pedagogical Approach Identity formation is a major task that has to be done by parents or teachers. In many studies, teachers (like parents) are viewed as identity agents who may help students achieve their identity goals by influencing their surroundings and experiences (Schachter and Ventura, 2008). Teachers can be purposeful co-constructors of teenagers' identities when they use a transformative pedagogical approach that includes encouraging collaborative learning and empowering students to think creatively and critically (Levy et. al., 2010). Teachers must adjust their focus in the classroom from lecturing to assessing to fulfill their new roles. A teacher in a student-centered pedagogy maintains the focus on learning, supervises the process, meters the challenge, and provides appropriate feedback to each student and the entire group Gordon et al. 2001). Teachers who use this pedagogy method are capable to assist teenagers in developing healthy identities (Marinda & Jennifer, 2010), as they are implementing a philosophy in the classroom that involves a clear investment in their students' developing identities.[6]

Parents and teachers are key figures in students' identity formation in this context. They are considered identity agents who have the potential to influence and shape students' sense of self through their interactions, teachings, and the environments they create.

The *Oxford Handbook of Identity Development* in Chapter 4, explains the concept of "identity formation across the lifespan and how it interacts with various aspects of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, posits that identity formation is a central

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[6] Tamanna Gupta and Jyotsana K. Shah, "International Journal of Indian Psychology," *Teacher As 'Shape-Shifter': Role of Teachers in Resolving Identity Crisis* 12, no. 1 (January - March 2024): 1073, https://doi.org/10.25215/1201.100, 1073.

development task that individuals must navigate to achieve a sense of self-understanding and purpose."[7] Erikson's stages of human development are:[8]

- Stage 1 (Infancy from birth to eighteen months): Trust vs. Mistrust
- Stage 2 (Toddler years from eighteen months to three years): Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt
- Stage 3 (Preschool years from three to five): Initiative vs. Guilt
- Stage 4 (Middle school years from six to eleven): Industry vs. Inferiority
- Stage 5 (Teen years from twelve to eighteen): Identity vs. Role Confusion
- Stage 6 (Young adult years from eighteen to forty): Intimacy vs. Isolation
- Stage 7 (Middle age from forty to sixty-five): Generativity vs. Stagnation
- Stage 8 (Older adulthood from sixty-five to death): Integrity vs. Despair

Erikson's theory emphasizes the importance of examining one's identity and making sense of it in relation to larger social and cultural identities, including spiritual and religious convictions. Erikson believed that there were several phases in the development of personality. According to Erickson, those who can manage the difficulties of identity development effectively can better partake in spiritual activities, comprehend their faith more fully, and develop a sense of connectedness to Jesus Christ. However, some insist that their cultural identities come from their self-determination. Others may adhere to conventional religious or cultural views that emphasize following

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[7] McLean, Kate C., and Syed, Moin, eds. 2014. *The Oxford Handbook of Identity Development*. Cary: Oxford University Press, Incorporated. Accessed May 6, 2024. ProQuest Ebook Central.

[8] Suzanne E. Vogel-Scibilia et al., "The Recovery Process Utilizing Erikson's Stages of Human Development," *Community Mental Health Journal* 45, no. 6 (June 17, 2009), https://doi.org/10.1007/s10597-009-9189-4.

particular doctrines or rituals over self-examination and blending many identities to define one's identity.

Overall, although Erikson's theory of identity development has impacted our knowledge of human development, his emphasis on integrating social, cultural, and spiritual identities in forming one's sense of self allows individuals to discover who they are in Jesus Christ. Discovering and understanding yourself can be fundamental to understanding your talents, abilities, and passions. It also assists you in discovering your purpose and direction in life or the journey of identity formation in Christ.

Erickson's theory is a helpful way to think about how each stage in the theory can be applied in each session of the intergenerational discipleship project by building on the foundation laid in the previous session so that each disciple forms a coherent sense of self as a follower of Jesus Christ, has an understanding of how he/she functions as a disciple in relationship to the local church and the body of Christ at large, and will meet specific needs and concerns of each millennial.

The Contextual Problem

The problem faced in the New Hope Baptist Church in Metuchen is a generational gap and a high attrition rate among millennials. Millennials come to church and then disappear. As the first generation to grow up with cutting-edge innovation and technology, news and information, the convenience of travel by car, jet, or train, and remote working, since tasks can now be done remotely via the Internet, how to do discipleship from an intergenerational perspective is crucial. We must consider the probable impact of such changes on our understanding of scripture and discipleship.

The article, "Religion Among Millennials," published by the Pew Research Center, argues that "Millennials are the least religious generation in history."[9] The article explains how the world's religious landscape is changing. Millennials may not attend church, but they acknowledge the need for spiritual growth and the desire to connect and belong. The intergenerational discipleship program will address their spiritual needs, critiques, and concerns.

An intergenerational discipleship program intentionally incorporating pedagogical theory and identity formation is vital to produce a dynamic and transforming learning environment that enables all generations to participate and to grow spiritually by deepening their understanding of their faith, forging a solid sense of who they are as disciples, and participating and creating a space for mutual learning and growth. One of the objectives of the intergenerational discipleship program is to equip all generations by teaching and learning the processes of being a disciple with models and teachings that consider how they learn. This means the intergenerational discipleship program must have a pedagogical methodology that impacts church growth by retaining new disciples.

In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire explains, "Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, how men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover

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[9] David Masci, "Q&A: Why Millennials Are Less Religious than Older Americans," Pew Research Center, January 8, 2016, https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2016/01/08/qa-why-millennials-are-less-religious-than-older-americans/.

how to participate in the transformation of their world."[10] Integrating Freire's argument, the purpose of an intergenerational discipleship program should be to prepare all generations to contribute significantly to the church and ministries. This gives all generations the tools to become Christ-like in church, community, and the world.

Therefore, intentional pedagogical methods and techniques are needed to plan and implement an intergenerational discipleship program. Cairney and Hart write, "The role of the Christian teacher is to endeavor to orchestrate a lived experience for their students that will present God to them in a biblically consistent manner."[11] The intergenerational discipleship program will "challenge them (teachers) to create a specific type of learning community within their classroom that is connected to the numerous other communities of practice of which their students are part. This enacted pedagogy requires the integration of knowing, being, and acting,"[12] as explained by Cairney and Hart.

The intergenerational discipleship program must develop a pedagogical philosophy that creates an environment that will make disciples feel like they belong to something of purpose and meaning. The pedagogy theory builds upon relationships that foster interaction and communication. This approach acknowledges the importance of relationships and reflection in the learning process across generations.

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[10] Paulo Freire and Myra Bergman Ramos, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Malmo: MTM, 2023), 34.

[11] Trevor H. Cairney and Trevor Hart, *Pedagogy and Education for Life: A Christian Reframing of Teaching, Learning, and Formation* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018).

[12] Cairney and Hart, *Pedagogy and Education for Life: A Christian Reframing of Teaching, Learning, and Formation*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2018).

Pedagogical theory can help facilitate conversations and discussions among congregants regarding “noncommitment” in church life and how the intergenerational discipleship program can support all generations in their spiritual growth and development. As a result, disciples can learn to think critically about being a disciple and apply it to every aspect of their lives.

Pedagogy of Jesus

Being a disciple is vital to the church. Making disciples is the church's primary goal, requiring and reaching out to make disciples for Christ. Pedagogical theory is critical because teaching is a calling that requires great intentionality and accountability. Numerous perspectives exist on the most successful pedagogical approaches, while new approaches are created annually. The Bible does not provide a curriculum, but we can learn what God thinks is essential about pedagogy through direct instruction and demonstration from Jesus Christ. According to the Scriptures, learning is the responsibility of the leaders (Exodus 18:17-23; 2 Chronicles 17:7), students (Ezra 7:10), parents (Proverbs 1:8), and God (Psalm 25:4-5). The Bible also provides a wealth of pedagogical tools and resources: music (Deuteronomy 31:19), parables (Mark 4:2), and information (Deuteronomy 11:19).

Jesus was a master of pedagogy and the ideal teacher. We have examples in the Scriptures that Jesus used object lessons (Matthew 6:28), stories (Matthew 13), current events (Luke 13:4-5), and illustrations (Luke 7:31–32). He used discourse and lectures (Matthew 24), dialogue with His followers (John 3), rhetorical questions (Luke 18:8), proverbs (Luke 7:45), and question-turning to get His listeners to come up with a

response (Mark 10:18). He corrected and modeled; He preached and taught. He assigned "homework" and made sure it was completed (Matthew 9:13; 12:7). He cited the Old Testament (Mark 12:26) as well as human conscience, emotions, and reason (Matthew 11:18; John 8:7; Mark 12:37). He used metaphors (John 9:5), hyperbole (Matthew 5:29), and offensive language (Luke 13:32) without fear.

Just as Jesus tailored his teachings and instructions to meet the needs of his followers, an intergenerational discipleship project will offer instructions based on the needs and learning styles of the participating disciples. Jesus often imparted important spiritual lessons through parables and instructions. An intergenerational discipleship program can use narratives and applicable examples to aid believers in understanding how to be a disciple and how to apply biblical truths to their lives.

In addition, making disciples is commanded by the Great Commission of Jesus Christ as He instructs the disciples to "…Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20). Applying the pedagogical theory to a biblical foundation involves collaborating with disciples, asking questions, and connecting to their lives. Connecting pedagogical theory with Matthew 28:16-20 involves examining how teaching and learning principles can be applied to the biblical concept of spreading the gospel and making disciples of all nations. This suggests that how we teach is as important as what we teach in making disciples. Therefore, how we teach (pedagogy) impacts ministry.

The intergenerational discipleship project must consider how Jesus instructed His disciples to make more disciples. Just as Jesus empowered His disciples to go out into the world and share the good news, the discipleship program will guide, support, and empower disciples to do the same on their Christian journey.

In the same way, the Great Commission encourages disciples to actively engage with others by sharing their faith in a meaningful and impactful way. An intergenerational discipleship program using a pedagogy theory can create an engaging environment and an inviting space where disciples are engaged in their learning. Alvah Sabin Hobart suggests, "There is more than getting people to know the story of the Bible and the Creed and the Catechism. More than to secure habitual attendance at the services of the church. He must bring the latent spiritual forces into full strength and get them into action."[13]

This idea suggests that knowing the stories and teachings of the Bible, reciting creeds, and attending church services are not enough for a disciple's spiritual growth, development, and discipleship-making. It implores disciples to move beyond church attendance and religious practices and become active in becoming disciples and going out and making disciples. Selecting from the theories of pedagogy will be a call to action, urging disciples to activate Matthew 28:19-20 and practically use their spiritual gifts, speak their beliefs, and live their values.

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[13] Alvah Sabin Hobart, *Pedagogy for Ministers: An Application of Pedagogical Principles to the Preaching and Other Work of the Pastor* (New York; Chicago; Toronto; London; Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1917), 27.

Pedagogy and Education for Life: A Christian Reframing of Teaching, Learning, and Formation explains, "Our classrooms need to be places where our children listen and apply biblical teaching to their lives."[14] This suggests that there should be a biblical understanding that will help show how disciples can connect their life experiences with the hope of the Gospel message. Using this approach seeks to give each generation a stronger sense of understanding and devotion to their faith, assist them in forming a solid moral compass, and direct them in making choices consistent with Christian principles.

Theologically

A pedagogy that includes pneumatology, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, is an essential component of an intergenerational discipleship project. This interaction is called "inspiration," or the work of the Holy Spirit on the disciple and the leader. The Holy Spirit is the promised comforter (John 14:15-31) and works with leaders and disciples to make a discipleship project successful. The helper that Jesus promised is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the principal teacher for all involved in the discipleship project.

In *History of the Church of Jesus Christ*, Joseph Smith writes that "teachers should be inspired when they teach."[15] Therefore, the Holy Spirit's interaction with pedagogical guidance, teaching, and learning approaches will inspire curriculum design and teaching. Disciples come from all backgrounds and learning styles. Pedagogical

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[14] Trevor H. Cairney and Trevor Hart, *Pedagogy and Education for Life: A Christian Reframing of Teaching, Learning, and Formation* (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2018).

[15] Joseph Smith and Heman C. Smith, *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter- Day Saints* (Kessinger Publishing, 2009), 34.

guidance will help the facilitator to respond to each disciple according to their needs and strengths.

The interaction of the Holy Spirit and pedagogy theories leads, guides, and encourages lessons or approaches to incorporate opportunities for generational interaction and reflection in the discipleship project. This will help disciples cultivate a deeper understanding of pneumatology and its implications for their faith. The use of pedagogy elements can deepen the educational experience. John 14:26 states, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything and remind you of all that I have said to you." The Holy Spirit works as a teacher through the facilitator, who gives disciples the power to fulfill the Great Commission. Therefore, if the Holy Spirit is the source, the intergenerational discipleship program will be beneficial in allowing the Holy Spirit to lead. Pneumatology allows disciples the opportunity to align their lives and actions with a pedagogical model.

John 4:16 demonstrates the biblical notion of the Holy Spirit's empowerment, teaching, and guiding the disciple's life. To effectively have an intergenerational discipleship program that will guide generations toward the Great Commission, pedagogical methods can be used with the Holy Spirit guiding to give insight, wisdom, and discernment.

In his book, *Walking in the Spirit: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Life,* Kenneth Berding writes, "If you want to be someone who brings glory to God, you must learn what it means to walk according to the Spirit. There are no shortcuts on this journey; the only way from here to there is to walk."[16] As a disciple, bringing glory to

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[16] Kenneth Berding, *Walking in the Spirit* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011), 16-17.

God through one's actions, attitudes, and character involves living in a way that reflects the way God wants us to live as disciples. It involves living in obedience to the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit and allowing the Holy Spirit to shape our thoughts, words, and deeds. Berding further notes, "That there are no easy paths to living a life that brings glory to God. It requires a commitment to the ongoing spiritual growth, transformation, and obedience to the Holy Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit involves the teacher and student to be intentional and deliberate with God."[17]

The intentional and deliberate methods of teaching and work of the Holy Spirit in discipleship are a relationship between the disciple and the Holy Spirit, characterized by faith, obedience, and a desire to know and follow Jesus Christ. The concept is to bring the Holy Spirit and pedagogical methods together so that the transformational power of the Holy Spirit can work within all generations.

The intergenerational discipleship project will assist all generations in developing a sense of self and a connection to Christ by allowing them to encounter the Spirit within. Generations can continue to discover more about themselves via interactions within the program's larger community as they do so through their experiences with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit will be present, and an encounter with the Holy Spirit will be present as generations are involved.

Historically

John Calvin was a theologian, preacher, and reformer. His steadfast devotion to the Gospel and profound grasp of God's word have motivated countless generations to

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[17] Berding, *Walking in the Spirit,* 17.

follow a life of discipleship characterized by faith and action. Tom Bloomer writes in his article, "John Calvin in Geneva: Nation-Building Missionary," that "John Calvin was a leader in a Reformation movement that taught that the Bible must be the source of authority to shape every aspect of people's lives, and the foundation of truth for entire communities and nations."[18]

Therefore, Calvin's views and pedagogical theory can intersect in several ways. In Book II, Chapter 8 of *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* Calvin "frames the importance of education in the Christian life."[19] Education was perhaps important in enabling students (disciples) to be instructed in the "knowledge of God" and to "increase in the fear and love of Christians." Calvin considered that teachers should support students in developing their moral and spiritual lives and suggested that education could have a foundation in biblical authority. The argument Calvin makes is that one must be educated as a way to form an understanding of what the world is and of one's place in the world and to encourage one's spiritual and moral development. Though formed 500 years ago, Calvin's ideas have a resonance for use in identity formation today.

In Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion: A Biography*, Bruce Gordan discusses Calvin's theological framework, which highlights "human depravity, the sovereignty of God, predestination, election, sanctification, spiritual growth, community,

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[18] Tombloomer and Tombloomer, "John Calvin in Geneva."

[19] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion & 2*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1, The Library of Christian Classics (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), xxxiii.

church, and the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers."[20] Calvin's theology, in general, can be utilized as the micro idea behind identity formation.

Pedagogy is the science of teaching – learning and the methods that undergird them, and it foregrounds how critically important it is to consider both the demands and operations of the learning tasks and the ability of the disciples to engage in them. In this way, pedagogical theory not only identifies the leader as the facilitator of learning but also prescribes the need for full participation on the part of the disciplines that Francis Bacon called "the arduous road" of mastering the disciplines of learning. Calvin's characteristic pedagogy was legal. We don't know much about Calvin's pedagogy or the method he used in preaching and teaching, but Steven Lawson is insightful when he writes, "Calvin was many things – a world-class theologian, a revered exegete, a renowned teacher, an ecclesiastical statesman, an influential Reformer, and more." However, James Montgomery Boice notes, "Calvin was preeminently a preacher, and as a preacher, he saw himself primarily as a Bible teacher."[21] Elsewhere Boice writes:

> Calvin had no weapon but the Bible. From the very first, his emphasis had been on Bible teaching. Calvin preached from the Bible every day, and under the power of that preaching, the city began to be transformed. As the people of Geneva acquired knowledge of God's Word and were changed by it, the city became, as John Knox called it later, a New Jerusalem.[22]

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[20] Bruce Gordon, *John Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion: A Biography* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2016).

[21] Steven J. Lawson, "Chapter 6: The Preacher of God's Word," in *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, and Doxology*, ed. Burk Parsons (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), 72.

[22] James Montgomery Boice, *Whatever Happened to the Gospel of Grace? Rediscovering the Doctrines that Shook the World* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2001), 83–84.

Scripture was the foundation for Calvin's deliberations about how faithful disciples should live together as a shared body of disciples and disciples fulfilled through their maturation. It adopted the very covenants of the faith delineated in the foundations of Calvin's pedagogical thought. An outline of some of the most significant features of John Calvin's pedagogy can be found in his expository preaching, examples of systematic theology, catechetical instruction, academic institutions, and pastoral presence.

In *The Institutes of the Christian Religion,* John Calvin contends, "We see that God, who might perfect his people in a moment, chooses not to bring them to manhood in any other way than by the education of the Church."[23] Calvin believed that education was to be founded upon the teaching of the Bible. Teachers should, therefore, lead students into the practice of knowing and being led also into the practice of doing so. Calvin placed education within the broad framework of discipleship and Christian authentic living; education provided the tools for attending to one's calling and, further, to living that calling within all the areas of discipleship and 'all of life.' Calvin's thought will provide the framework for developing an intergenerational discipleship program that equips disciples to grow in their identities as whole followers of Jesus.

Calvin's views about interrelationships can, in turn, inform pedagogical theory, especially in the longing for a more explicitly moral, identity-forming, and spiritual emphasis in intergenerational education. Calvin was "renowned for his pastoral skill in

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[23] John Calvin and Henry Beveridge, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, vol. 3 (Edinburgh: The Calvin Translation Society, 1845), 14.

church leadership, his apologetic adroitness as a defender of truth, and his superhuman success in nurturing students and motivating others to action."[24]

Pedagogical theorists, in turn, can guide such an intergenerational discipleship project by providing practical guidance on how to put things into practice in the classroom, such as active learning strategies and disciple-centered pedagogical approaches. Calvin's founding of the Academy of Geneva in 1559 (the nucleus of what's now the University of Geneva), where the Reformed faith could train disciples for generations to come (along with ministers, scholars, and leaders), highlights his commitment to education and formation. Here, too, John Calvin helped to shape Geneva, calling members to dedicate themselves to cultivating the discipleship of others. John Calvin's role in Geneva is analogous to what generations could be called and trained to do as disciples in an intergenerational discipleship project: to carry out their divinely given vocation as disciples of Jesus Christ.

The community involvement and active participation in church activities promoted by Calvin was helpful. Becoming part of a church community is vital and effective in providing an intergenerational discipleship project: helping others, investing time in group worship, and helping to develop relationships within the faith community. Similarly, promoting the participation of all generations in the church's activities will help reinforce being present in gatherings of prayer, serving, and any other event that may be considered part of the ministry schedule. This is because in the context of learning, the project structure can be regarded as real-world and experiential. The

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[24] Phillip R. Johnson, "Chapter 8: The Writer For the People Of God," in *John Calvin: A Heart for Devotion, Doctrine, and Doxology*, ed. Burk Parsons (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2008), 95.

fundamental nature of the ideas of pedagogical concepts is experimentation to develop learning outcomes and understand the generations, as well as the discussions that may arise on the matter.

Conclusion

Also, identity formation processes of foundational discipleship can be better theorized and acquired through study, and those processes lend themselves more easily to the defining and establishing of any intergenerational discipleship project. It is evident that intergenerational discipleship is significant to intergenerational identity formation and the realization of potential that is innate within the disciple. Thus, these pedagogical identity formation theories inspired by the progressive work of the Holy Spirit provide a valuable lens through which we may understand the identity formation that happens during discipleship formation and how disciples learn in orthodox faith communities. The teacher-learner epistemological relationship – especially as it relates to the pedagogy of identity formation – suggests the value of the teacher's ability to be efficacious in discipling the disciples, especially as it relates to the progressive work of God.

This discipleship relationship becomes vital in the intergenerational transmission of the disciples' beliefs and in forming their identity as a disciple. This intergenerational pedagogical framework for discipleship has applications in theology, educational ministry and practice, and the study and practice of spiritual formation. By integrating pedagogical theories into a discipleship project, leaders can create an intentional, formative, sequential process to accompany generations in their spiritual journey toward becoming mature followers of Jesus, growing into their identity as Christians rooted in

and living out their faith and social identity in Christ. Pedagogical theories guide teaching within the project as intergenerational believers are nurtured in their spiritual formation, theological education, and the development of disciple character, identity, and sense of purpose in God.

Integration of these ideas, then, leads to a more comprehensive understanding of becoming and growing as disciples of Christ. This, in turn, enables one to see more clearly the interrelatedness of the various aspects of spiritual formation involving teaching, learning, becoming, growing, and guiding others. Those insights can inform and equip the teacher and learner to become and guide others in becoming disciples more intentionally and effectively.

My own discipleship is shaped by a greater comprehension of such pedagogical theories and identity-forming processes, and how they feed into and enrich discipleship. I have a better grasp on how we learn and grow as disciples and how these processes might, in turn, inform our discipling practices.

This process demonstrates how important it is to help each other make space for encouragement where people can experience themselves as learners, become reflective, and be transformed. The model, framework, and guided practice expands the disciples' understanding of Scripture, helps to improve their relationship with God, and provides and creates intergenerational connections and fellowship.

In addition, the study of discipleship has helped me to see how interdisciplinarity relates to an intergenerational discipleship project. In thinking of myself as a person in relation to my values, my ideas, and how God is calling me to be as a disciple through this process, I'm a better person. I have also become more clearly self-aware, self-

confident, and self-efficacious about various pedagogical theories that I can bring to bear on a process of discipleship that we all will engage in – the making of a disciple.

Moreover, in recent years (2), I have developed a deep sense of what its strengths and failings are; what I can develop and aspire to be as I grow closer to God and become a disciple and a disciple-maker. I have felt a profound sense of satisfaction with a meaningful, inspired purpose in life. I find myself more firmly committed to, and with greater passion for, doing what God has called me to do.

But even more, I see myself as an improved, fuller, more deliberate disciple of Christ, because I have combined theories about identity-formation and pedagogy with discipleship practice. I am also looking forward to seeing how this plays out when it comes time to implement an intergenerational discipleship project. To be a disciple is to grow in faith and in your disciple-making over a lifetime. I am grateful for what I've learned and for what has been made possible by such growth.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis of the DMin project titled, *"Intentional Discipleship Through an Intergenerational Bridge Building Model,*" based on Matthew 28:16-20.[1] Conducted at New Hope Baptist Church in Metuchen, New Jersey, a predominantly Black congregation of 150 members, the research addresses the high attrition rate among millennials. The goal is to create a discipleship program fostering intergenerational partnerships that strengthen faith, deepen commitment, and ignite active participation across generations. This seven-week project uses surveys, class discussions, activities, journaling, and interviews to implement an intergenerational discipleship model that bridges the generational gap that exists in the congregation.

The "Great Commission" is understood as a mandate to share the good news and make disciples by going into the world. It reflects a dual imperative that underscores the necessity of cultivating faithfulness and transformational action locally and globally. The goal is to ensure all generations feel valued, understood, and fully included in the growth of the Church and to recognize that the Church needs to grow both spiritually and communally across generations to thrive. Jesus called all disciples to serve as catalysts

[1] *The Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989).

and vessels of transformation for other people's growth. By doing this, we create disciples who develop more disciples, continuing a cycle of development and transformation. My spiritual formation can be attributed to the structured and purposeful approach of intentional discipleship, as it creates a foundational framework for faith development, reinforces accountability, and fosters spiritual maturity within the Christian community. Individuals are nurtured through authentic intergenerational relationships as lived experiences are intentionally passed down from one generation to the next.

This process fosters unity, ensures continuity within the body of Christ, and mitigates growing in isolation through a supportive community where each person is consistently encouraged, challenged, and equipped to live out their faith. As a result, the Church becomes a vibrant, growing family where every member has a role in helping others grow closer to Christ.

This research integrates the core elements of my DMin focus group, "Pastoral Leadership, Prophetic Preaching, and Spiritual Formation," by emphasizing the Church's responsibility to embody personal and shared spiritual development, transformation, and respond faithfully to call of the "Great Commission" to make disciples and grow the Church, spiritually, communally, and generationally.

Methodology

My methodology is direct observation using quantitative methods to test my hypothesis and evaluate the results. *Studying Congregations* explains the direct observation method as a way of learning about congregations by observing their activities and interactions firsthand. The technique involved spending time in the community and

watching worship services, meetings, and other activities.[2] The reason why I chose this method is because the direct observation protocol describes in real time what happens when generations outside the silent generation and baby boomers become members of our community and assesses how active they are within the church. This project was informed by participants from silent generation, baby boomers, Generation X and Z, the rearranged chapter titles of the book, "I Am a Church Member," by Thom S. Rainer, pre- and post-project questionnaires, journal reflection questions provided to the participants, in-class discussion questions, and follow-up interviews. To help inform my data collection, each participant had to select the generation they represented. On the first day of class, participants must complete a pre-questionnaire form, which consists of the following questions:

1. How do you define Christian discipleship and stewardship?
2. Do you believe there is a specific age when persons should begin taking Christian discipleship and stewardship seriously? If so, please identify what you think that age is and why you believe that the stated age is the most appropriate time for persons to take Christian discipleship and stewardship?
3. Have you practiced Christian discipleship and stewardship thus far in your life?
4. When you have practiced Christian discipleship and stewardship, if you have practiced it, how did it make you feel? When answering this question, share all the details of your past experiences including how practicing Christian discipleship and stewardship made you feel, how you were viewed and understood by the people around you, and if it made you want to engage more.

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[2] Ammerman, et al., *Studying Congregations*, 199.

5. What have some of your drawbacks you have experienced as you have engaged in Christian discipleship and stewardship?
6. How has the church provided you with opportunities to engage in Christian discipleship and stewardship?
7. How can this church improve on providing you and others in you your generation with opportunities to engage in Christian discipleship and stewardship?

Throughout the seven-week course, participants engaged in guided discussion designed as an intentional dialogue to deepen mutual understanding and respect, as well as promote unity across generational lines. These structured conversations served as a catalyst for building relationships, challenging assumptions, and actively bridging the gap between generations within the church context. Participants were given journal questions to reflect on during the week.

These questions were designed to encourage intentional self-examination, enhance their spiritual awareness, discernment and understanding, and facilitate critical engagement with the intergenerational themes discussed in class. These reflections helped shape participants' perception of the importance of the project's objective in bridging generational gaps within the church community.

Post-survey questionnaires and one-on-one interviews were completed together to capture or quantify the emotional and spiritual depth of the project. Some of the participants chose to share their experience verbally.

Implementation

This project was implemented through a seven-week class taught on Sunday mornings from 9:00 – 10:30 am from February 9 – April 6, 2025, with an option to participate through Zoom for those who could not join the class in person. The participants were invited to volunteer directly through direct ask, weekly registration, announcements, and flyers leading up to February 9, 2025. The prospective participants who showed interests in the project were required to commit to all sessions and were called to register by providing their name, telephone number, email, and stating their generation on a form provided in the church's vestibule. No one was turned away from joining the project. The class included ten participants (2 silent generations, 5 baby boomers, 2 Generation X, and 1 Generation Z All volunteers were assigned to NHBC-P with a number. In *Speaking Across Generations,* Darrell E. Hall provides a framework for understanding generational distinctions, which serves as the basis for the generational classifications used in this project. The following chart categorizes participants according to their birth years and corresponding generational cohort as outlined by Hall. The silent generation (elders) were born in 1945 and before, baby boomers were born between 1946 and 1964, Generation X was born between 1965 and 1983, millennials were born between 1984 and 1998, and Generation Z was born between 1999 to 2015.[3]

[3] Hall. *Speaking across Generations,*14-15.

Table 6.1- Participants Generational Dates

Number	Birth Year	Generation
NHBC-P01	1970	Generation X
NHBC-P02	2004	Generation Z
NHBC-P03	1943	Silent Generation
NHBC-P04	1949	Baby Boomers
NHBC-P05	1962	Baby Boomers
NHBC-P06	1938	Silent Generation
NHBC-P07	1948	Baby Boomers
NHBC-P08	1970	Generation X
NHBC-P09	1963	Baby Boomers
NHBC-P10	1962	Baby Boomers

The professional associates included in this project were Rev. Dr. Joy Lynch, graduate of New Brunswick Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry program; Rev. Dr. Brian Rawls, graduate of New Brunswick Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry program; Rev. Dr. Nicole B. Simpson, graduate of Boston University Doctor of Ministry program; and Rev. Dr. Anita Wright, graduate of Drew University School of Theology Doctor of Ministry program.

Each of these professional associates played a vital role in the development and execution of my DMin project, offering leadership, guidance, insight, and unwavering support. As the project progressed and began to take shape, they provided consistent spiritual encouragement through prayer, regular check-ins, and by serving as trusted sounding boards throughout the journey. Rev. Dr. Nicole B. Simpson was especially impactful in recommending key books that shaped my research and theological

framework. Rev. Dr. Joy Lynch and Rev. Dr. Anita Wright generously shared their experience and wisdom by leading a dynamic Zoom lesson that enriched the project's discipleship modules. Rev. Dr. Brian Rawls was a constant source of affirmation, regularly calling and texting with words of encouragement that fueled my perseverance and focus. Their collective contributions were both foundational and transformative to this work. The context associates were instrumental in shaping the project's concept, design, direction, and implementation. Their input was integral throughout the developmental process. Meetings that contributed to the formation of the project took place in a variety of settings, including in-person sessions during DMin intensive week at United Theological Seminary, focus group gatherings at other out-of-state locations, and virtual discussions via Zoom.

Together, the professional and context associates formed a collaborative cohort with insights and partnership that contributed meaningfully to every phase of this project. Their varied professional, academic experiences, and ministry experience enhanced the project, ensuring that it was theologically sound, contextually relevant, and spiritually impactful. I am grateful for their willingness to walk alongside me, and this project reflects shared ministry and partnership. Each session was carried out as follows: in-person and Zoom. These were the sessions of the project:

Session One (Sunday, February 9, 2025, 9:00 am)

- Facilitator: Rev. Crystal White
- Orientation
- Worship Song

- Introductions
- Course Objectives
- Schedules
- Expectations
- Administer pre-questionnaire/survey
- Give out Journal Entry Notebook
- Other pertinent details included a discussion of Foundational Papers

On Sunday, February 9, 2025, Session One Orientation was held in the social hall for in-person participants and on the Zoom platform for virtual participants. During this session, we discussed class expectations, curriculum for upcoming lessons, the pre-questionnaire, and the use of journal books for weekly reflections, and each participant received a copy of "*I Am a Church Member"* by Thom S. Rainer.

The biblical text selected for the project is Matthew 28:16-20. Jesus instructs his disciples to "make disciples of all nations." This text is referred to as the "Great Commission" which recognizes that every generation is called to personal discipleship and equipping and empowering others to do the same. The Great Commission will serve as a catalyst for bridging intergenerational gaps within the seven-week project. Building on our previous discussion regarding the biblical foundations paper, the historical foundations paper provides an exploration of a key historical figure, John Calvin, whose approach to discipleship offers the project valuable spiritual disciplines in the process of discipleship. John Calvin's approaches to spiritual principles, community, building structures, and discipleship can be used for this project.

Building on the historical insights of John Calvin, this project will use Pneumatology—the study of the Holy Spirit—to establish a biblical foundation for understanding the Spirit's person and work. The Holy Spirit will empower and guide participants into active discipleship, serving as a bridge across generations, as emphasized in Matthew 28:20: "baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

After exploring the role of the Holy Spirit in developing an intergenerational discipleship project, we now turn to the pedagogical theory of identity formation. In this process, we recognize that the Holy Spirit is at work in learning and self-discovery, shaping disciples into the image of Christ. Pedagogical methods and tools will be used to engage participants, strengthening their spiritual formation and equipping them to become active disciples. Participants left with a clear understanding of how my foundational papers—biblical, historical, theological, and interdisciplinary—informed the creation of the project, *Intentional Discipleship Through an Intergenerational Bridge Building Model*. They also grasped the expectations for their upcoming involvement, including the purpose and requirements of project participation.

Session Two (Sunday, February 16, 2025, 9:00 am)

- Facilitator: Rev. Crystal White
- Worship Song
- Lesson Title: Discipleship — Two Types of Church Members: Are you a member or a disciple? / Biblical Foundation Paper
- Scripture: Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12

On Sunday, February 16, 2025, Session Two was held in the social hall for in-person participants and on the Zoom platform for virtual participants. This lesson explored the differences between being a church member and a church disciple. We examined the characteristics of each and reflected on which one describes us as individuals. Passive members expect the church to serve them and are focused on individual desires, comforts, and do not contribute actively to the church or take on any responsibilities. They are spectators of grace, not stewards of it.

On the other hand, active members are committed to serving, contributing, and understand that being a disciple is about serving and contributing to the church community, taking responsibility for their spiritual growth, actively participating in church activities, and looking for ways to serve others. All disciples of the body of Christ are called to service and to love one another, recognizing that we are all united in our faith journey. To encourage engagement and collaboration between generations with emphasis on personal responsibility, unity, and serving one another within the church body, we concluded the class with an activity called the Body of Christ.

We had a team that consisted of one representative from each generation– silent generation, baby boomer, Generation X, and Generation Z. There were items laid out on a table representing different roles in the church (e.g., broom, hymnal book, volunteering sign-up sheet, food basket)– each item symbolizing a different church ministry or activity. The challenge was that each member on the team had to come together and figure out how to serve the church with the symbolized items. For example, when one picked up the broom, they needed to sweep a designated area symbolizing service in cleaning or organizing. The task must be completed working together, relying on each

other, no matter their generation, to contribute and serve. After completing the task, we gathered and reflected on the experience. The questions for reflection were as follows:

1. How did you feel serving together with someone from a different generation? Did you notice how each person's contribution helped complete the task?
2. How do the different roles in the church (whether young or old) contribute to the overall mission of the church?
3. What responsibilities do you have in the church, and how can you serve or contribute in new ways?

Overall, this activity showed how different generations were able to collaborate effectively and contribute meaningfully to the church. The interaction between generations demonstrated unity, commitment, and mutual responsibility, reinforcing the biblical principle of being part of the body of Christ that serves one another.

Session Three (Sunday, February 23, 2025, 9:00 am)

- Facilitator: Rev. Crystal White
- Worship Song
- Lesson Title: Engaged Discipleship
- Scripture: 1 Corinthians 12:12-14

This lesson focused on the church's approach to discipleship and ministry involvement, emphasizing the need for a shift from passive discipleship to active discipleship through intergenerational engagement. Every disciple functions within different parts of the body of Christ (the foot is to walk, the hand is to hold, the ear is to

hear, the eye is to see, the nose is to smell). God gives all disciples unique gifts to be used for the common good.

Participants offered practical suggestions to improve church operations and discipleship participation, such as organizing ministry fairs, enhancing outreach strategies, and strengthening accountability within church activities. They discussed challenges faced by different generational groups and emphasized the need to create an inclusive environment where all disciples can contribute their unique gifts and maintain transparency in operations and growth efforts. The following challenges were identified: The silent generation reported feelings of inadequacy and a lack of support; baby boomers cited time constraints, health issues, and competing priorities; Generation X noted distractions and self-centered barriers; and Generation Z pointed to time constraints and general distractions. The responses suggest that an effective discipleship framework will address these challenges through strategies that recognize the gifts and talents of every generation by giving them spiritual agency, leading to confidence and utilization of their gifts within the life of the church.

Session Four (Sunday, March 2, 2025, 9:00 am)

- Facilitator: Rev. Crystal White
- Worship Song
- Lesson Title: Unified Discipleship
- Scripture: Ephesians 4:3

In this lesson, we defined unity as “bringing together separate or fragmented parts into a unified whole.” Unity is cultivated through a shared relationship with God, a

commitment to one another, caring for each other's needs, and working together in harmony. This principle is reflected in John 13:35: "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Disciples serve as the source of unity because we are members of one body, as described in 1 Corinthians 12:12–27. We concluded by emphasizing the need for unity within the body of Christ, with all disciples working together in harmony. The discussion closed with a reflection on how diverse parts and gifts contribute to the body's unity, with Jesus Christ as the head.

Session Five (Sunday, March 9, 2025, 9:00 am)

- Facilitator: Rev. Crystal White
- Worship Song
- Lesson Title: Selfless Discipleship
- Scripture: Matthew 28:19-20; Philippians 2:3-8

This lesson addresses the problem of selfishness within the body of Christ. It contrasts with the biblical model of a servant's heart as shown in Philippians 2:3-8. Selfless discipleship requires a disciple to be or become a servant. The word servant is defined as "someone who humbly puts the needs of others before their own, willingly serving without seeking personal gain or recognition." A servant is marked by humility, selflessness, and a dedication to helping others. Disciples are called to embody these traits, which requires a mindset shift to one that embraces unity over division, prioritizes Christ's mission of discipleship, and is grounded in the commitment of prayer and service.

Session Six (Sunday, March 23, 2025, 9:00 am)

- Facilitators: Rev. Dr. Anita R. Wright, Grier Presbyterian Church, Charlotte, NC and Rev. Crystal White
- Worship Song
- Lesson Title: Powerful Discipleship: The Importance of Prayer
- Scripture: Matthew 6:9-13; Acts 12:1-5; Ephesians 5:25-30

During the first half of the class, Rev. Dr. Anita R. Wright facilitated a spirit-led lesson on the Lord's Prayer found in Matthew 6:9-13. Dr. Wright walked us through Matthew 6:9-13 verse by verse, giving the class a framework that explored Jesus's model of prayer and shapes how we approach God in prayer. Following the lesson, Dr. Wright opened the floor, inviting questions and thoughtful responses from her and the class.

In the second half, we continued to explore the power and importance of prayer. The question was asked: "Why do we pray?" The responses included: communion with God, to be given guidance and wisdom, strength and comfort, intercession for others, spiritual growth, healing and restoration, protection, spiritual warfare, expression of gratitude, transformation, and participation in God's work. Participating in God's work is a mandate of discipleship where we become active agents for Christ in the mission of Matthew 28:16-20.

Session Seven (Sunday, March 30, 2025, 9:00 am)

Please be advised of a change to our schedule. Session 7 was originally planned for a different date and was moved to Sunday, March 23, 2025, due to a scheduling conflict involving the previously allocated space

- Facilitator: Rev. Dr. Joy Lynch, Triumphant Community Church, Somerset, NJ and Rev. Crystal White
- Lesson Title: Discipleship Is a Gift and Inclusive: Provision for the Mission
- Scripture: Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

Rev. Dr. Joy Lynch gave a power point presentation entitled, "*Provision for the Mission,* Matthew 28:18-20." She explained that as disciples we bring our personality, knowledge, experience, and financial resources into the spaces that we occupy to influence the world, giving us intergenerational and cultural implications. In the context of the 21st century, the Church stands equipped with all that is necessary to fulfill the Great Commission, having been both commissioned and empowered by God to participate in God's redemptive work. The mission remains clear: make disciples of all nations. This calling invites disciples to be intentional in discipling one another by engaging intergenerationally, inviting younger individuals to share their skills or learning intentionally from cross-cultural experiences. Dr. Lynch's lesson brought a full-circle realization: after receiving the gift of salvation, disciples become part of the body of Christ—the Church. Salvation is a precious gift from God, and in response, we intentionally serve Christ, the Church, others, and the world.

Summary of Learning

The subsequent data presents a synopsis of the information gathered during the seven-week project lessons. Participants submitted pre- and post-questionnaires, journal reflections, class discussions, and interviews of what they learned from the project.

Pre-Questionnaire Questions and Responses

How do you define Christian discipleship and stewardship?

This question illuminates participants' starting point spiritually, relationally, and in terms of their expectations for the project. This helps to assess growth at the end of the project. Eight out of nine submissions offered a similar response with an understanding of the interconnectedness in Christian discipleship and stewardship. Discipleship is the being a follower of Christ, and stewardship is a way that following is being active use of one's life and resources.

Do you believe there is a specific age when persons should begin taking Christian discipleship and stewardship seriously? If so, please identify what you think that age is and why you believe the stated age is the most appropriate time for persons to take Christian discipleship and stewardship?

This question aimed to assess how participants view relationships with those from other age groups– an important factor for planning the project format and anticipating potential challenges. All ten participants agreed that there is no specific age at which individuals should begin Christian discipleship and stewardship, though one Generation X participant noted that the age of understanding or maturity should be considered. However, the question primarily addressed readiness for discipleship and stewardship rather than intergenerational relationships. Additional data may be needed to gain a clearer understanding of intergenerational dynamics.

Have you practiced Christian discipleship and stewardship thus far in your life?

This question was designed to ensure the project meets their spiritual needs and fosters the kind of discipleship they are seeking. Ten out of ten participants responded "Yes." This understanding will help with intergenerational learning and engagement.

If you have practiced Christian discipleship and stewardship (or when you do), how did it make you feel? In your response, please share detailed experiences, including how practicing Christian discipleship and stewardship affected your feelings, how others perceived and understood you, and whether it inspired you to engage more deeply in these practices.

This question was designed to assess participants' knowledge of their spiritual practices and desired growth areas, enabling the project to tailor content, discussions, and activities to be relevant and impactful for all generations involved. All ten participants reported feelings of joy and fulfilment. The silent generation connected these feelings to honoring God, baby boomers to their involvement in the life of the church, Generation X to a desire for belonging, and Generation Z to support from their peers. The positive feelings expressed across generations can serve as a catalyst for motivating participants to contribute to building an intentional intergenerational community.

What have some of your drawbacks you have experienced as you have engaged in Christian discipleship and stewardship?

This question was designed to assess whether participants perceive generational gaps in understanding and practicing discipleship and stewardship. All ten participants reported being exposed to a multiplicity of lived realities, with the most common

experience across generations being judgment for past mistakes. The silent generation reported no significant drawbacks, while baby boomers cited internal struggles. Generation X highlighted judgment from older generations regarding their personal relationship with God, and Generation Z identified the near absence of their generation within the life of the church as a primary concern. Overall, the responses reveal that Christian discipleship and stewardship present significant challenges. By acknowledging these realities, an intentional bridge-building discipleship model can offer a more effective path for serving and supporting one another.

How has the church provided you with opportunities to engage in Christian discipleship and stewardship?

This question was designed to identify existing opportunities the church may be missing for fostering discipleship or stewardship across generations. All ten participants responded. The silent generation and baby boomers expressed strong appreciation for the ministry opportunities currently offered. In contrast, Generation X and Generation Z noted the need for greater openness to new ideas and perspectives, emphasizing a willingness to adapt, embrace change, and make engagement more accessible for younger generations. Overall, the responses, particularly from Generation Z, highlight a need for their perspectives to be validated to foster a stronger sense of belonging within the faith community.

How can this church improve on providing you and others in your generation with opportunities to engage in Christian discipleship and stewardship?

This question was designed to assess how different age groups feel the church could better support them and how each generation perceives their current opportunities. All ten participants responded– the silent generation values the consistent leadership the church provides, baby boomers expressed a desire for greater intergenerational and youth engagement. Generation X hopes for more inclusion with older generations, while Generation Z seeks greater responsibility within the church. Overall, the responses suggest that strengthening Christian discipleship and stewardship requires building an active intergenerational community through ministries that intentionally involve all generations.

Discussion Questions and Responses

Session Two Discipleship

What does it look like for you to serve others? What barriers or challenges prevent you from fully living out your faith in action?

Responses to the question revealed intergenerational perspectives on service and the obstacles that hinder participants from actively practicing their faith through discipleship with one another. Participants described service through the themes of love, humility, and sacrifice, emphasizing love as the driving motive behind their actions. They spoke of serving with humility and sacrifice as a reflection of Christlike character. Many

expressed the need for inclusive acceptance, highlighting the importance of welcoming others without judgment. There was also a strong desire to grow in Christ and deepen their knowledge through Bible study to better serve others. Additionally, participants expressed a clear commitment to living out discipleship through active engagement in the broader community.

Session Three Engaged Discipleship

What gifts, talents, and resources do you have to engage with to serve the ministry?

Participants across generations bring a wide range of gifts, talents, and resources to serve the body of Christ. The silent generation offers care and compassion, sharing medical expertise, a love for nature, and encouragement through active listening. Baby boomers focus on practical service and community-building, contributing through hospitality, organization, administrative tasks, and creativity in music, dance, and mentoring. Generation X shares artistic talents in social media, marketing, theater, and music. Generation Z engages through communication and encouragement, inspiring younger believers in their faith journey. Together, these contributions highlight the intergenerational strength and diverse gifts active in discipleship.

Where do you see yourself playing in the ministry as you grow in the faith?

Each generation brings unique strengths: the silent generation offers wisdom, baby boomers provide leadership and service, Generation X bridges traditional and

modern skills, and Generation Z emphasizes connection and inspiration. Together, they form a vibrant, intergenerational tapestry that enriches the life of the church.

Session Four Unified Discipleship

What are the biggest challenges or obstacles that you face in your spiritual walk?

This discussion invited all participants to reflect on the challenges and obstacles they faced in their spiritual walk. Their responses identified specific challenges impacting their ability to grow in faith and serve each other. Table 6.1 summarizes these barriers and the core themes that emerged.

Table 6.2 – Generational Challenges

Generation	Challenges	Feelings
Silent Generation (1928-1945)	• Rejection • Inadequacy	Insecurity, fatigue, connection
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	• Time constraints • Health Issues	Burnout, overcommitment
Generation X (1965-1980)	• Biblical illiteracy • Distractions • Regret	Self-doubt, anxiety, stress
Generation Z (1996-2012)	• Academic pressure • Burnout • Competition	Exhaustion, inconsistency

Each generation emphasized the need to be equipped for intentional discipleship that focuses on guidance, empowerment, and support– nurturing the whole person, being

sensitive to life circumstances, and fostering relational engagement. After the conclusion of the discussion question, we hosted a Pop-Up Ministry Fair featuring ministry (auxiliary) leaders, allowing them to engage directly with participants and share opportunities for service and discipleship connections. Following the Ministry Fair, a participant from Generation X became involved with the media team.

Session Five Selfless Discipleship

How can I stop trying to make church all about me and instead adopt the proper mindset of a servant to the body of Christ?

The responses across generations reveal a collective desire to develop a Christ-centered mindset that contributes meaningfully to the body of Christ. Each generation emphasized the importance of intentional discipleship and maintaining a consistent prayer life as essential practices for shaping their mindset. A recurring theme among the silent generation was the need to see themselves as part of a community committed to discipling others. This mindset involves being open to the perspectives of younger generations. The baby boomer generation emphasized the importance of placing God first in their lives, fostering a mindset focused on serving others. There is also a recognized need within this generation to become more active and intentional in their service to God. Generation X responses reflect a desire to shift their mindset from self-interest toward the needs and mission of the church. They acknowledged that personal preferences can sometimes take precedence when their focus should be on discipleship. Generation Z responses reflected a mindset centered on unity and dependence. They

recognized the need to avoid letting personal ambition distract from the larger purpose and mission of God. Moving from self-centeredness to servanthood within the church across all generations requires a mindset that actively participates in the body of Christ through engagement in the ministries and life of the church.

Session Six Powerful Discipleship

Why do you pray?

It was very interesting to note that there were shared responses across generations. Generation X and Generation Z emphasized prayer as a method of connecting with God, viewing prayer as the means of staying connected with Jesus. The silent generation and baby boomers mentioned prayer as the means for the forgiveness of sins. Despite the different emphases on prayer, the consensus is that prayer is essential for connecting with and maintaining a relationship with God.

Session Seven: Discipleship Is a Gift and Inclusive– Provision for the Mission

What does it mean for disciples to surrender our expectations of each other?

Across generations, at the heart of the responses is an awareness of the need to accept others as they are. Another important theme is the understanding that individuals should not project their personal expectations onto others. The silent generation emphasizes communication and understanding as ways to bridge gaps between people.

The baby boomer generation highlights the importance of unconditional acceptance and love for one another. Generation X underscores that each person's discipleship walk is unique and should be respected. Generation Z emphasizes inclusivity, advocating for the acceptance of everyone regardless of gender, race, or class. In essence, surrendering expectations of one another within the community of faith extends the Christ-like virtues of love, forgiveness, understanding, and grace that Jesus Christ extends to us.

Journal Reflection Questions and Responses

How do you currently engage in community and fellowship with other believers?

Six out of ten participants submitted responses, which revealed the multiplicity of ways participants engage in community and fellowship. The silent generation and baby boomers expressed enjoyment in active ministry within traditional ministry structures, while Generation X preferred connection on a more personal and relational level. There was no response recorded from Generation Z.

What role does accountability play in your spiritual life, and how do you seek support from others in your faith? Six out of the ten participants' submissions were recorded.

The following chart reveals how perspectives differ from each generation accountability and ways of seeking their support systems, emphasizing the need to have spiritual disciples who would meet the needs of each generation.

Table 6.3 – Generational Accountability

Generation	Accountability	Ways of Seeking Support
Silent Generation	• Fulfill commitments. • Accountability as a Christian obligation. • Commitment to God.	Values collaboration. Seeks help from others to accomplish God's work and welcomes assistance.
Baby Boomer	• Emphasizes integrity • Personal responsibility • Accountable to God.	Ministry support, counseling, prayer, intergenerational sharing, and direct communication with church leaders and members.
Generation Z	• Prioritizes God with other believers. • Values authenticity. • Openness in conversations.	In community with other believers, emphasizing shared faith and mutual encouragement.

How would you describe your relationship with others in the church or faith community?

Six out of ten participants responded, describing their relationship with others in church or faith community in ways that are encouraging and supportive. The participants used favorable words such as friendly, trust, love, respectful, and mutual respect.

What do you hope to experience in terms of fellowship and support through this discipleship group?

Six out of ten participants responded, each generation carrying its own unique experience in terms of fellowship and support through the discipleship group. The silent

generation shared their experiences within the group involved embracing one another with warmth and acceptance. The baby boomers offered diverse aspirations, with one participant expressing the desire to better listen to the perspectives of others, and another seeking to form bonded relationships within the group. The two participants from Generation X emphasized their desire to express themselves freely within the provided space, without fear of judgment.

Can you share an experience where you learned something valuable from someone of a different generation? How did that experience impact your spiritual life?

Six out of the ten participants submitted responses. Although different life experiences were shared, participants expressed in great detail what they learned from those experiences. These reflections provided valuable insight on how and why lived experiences can contribute to attitudes and behaviors that shape faith transformation.

What do you think are some common stereotypes or misconceptions that different generations have about each other in the church or community?

Six out of ten participants responded. The content in Table 6.3 provides the stereotypes or misconceptions identified by the responders.

Table 6.4 - Generational Stereotypes and Misconceptions

Generation Perspective	**Stereotypes/Misconceptions About Other Generations**
Older Generations as perceived by Silent Generation & Baby Boomers	Younger generations are self-centered, self-absorbed, resistant to positive suggestions, lacking commitment to God, overly reliant on technology, and lacking biblical knowledge.
Younger Generations as perceived by Silent Generation & Baby Boomers	Older generations are rigid, unforgiving, highly critical without understanding, stuck in old traditions, too divisive and political, and potentially hypocritical (not living what they preach).
Baby Boomers about Younger generations	Younger generations lack commitment in serving God, prefer everything through technology, don't have much knowledge about the Bible, and potentially have a "take over spirit," wanting to change doctrine and dilute worship.
Younger generations (Generation X and Z) about older generations (boomers & silent generation)	Older generations are set in their ways, want to do things the way they've always been done, and are perhaps too stringent about church practices.

The stereotypes or misconceptions identified by the responders, as highlighted in the table, present obstacles and hindrances that impact discipleship within the body of Christ. Therefore, to dismantle these barriers, it is essential to progress toward an intentional bridge-building model for discipleship.

What do you find to be the most challenging when it comes to communicating or connecting with people from other generations, and how can we overcome these challenges?

Six out of ten participants responded. The content in Table 6.4 provides the challenges when communicating or connecting with other generations and how to overcome identified by the responders.

Table 6.5 - Generational Challenges and Solutions

Generation	**Challenges**	**Proposed Solutions**
Silent Generation	• Lack of trust among generations. • Strain • Misunderstanding	Cultivate a genuine desire to approach interactions from a position of love and acceptance
Baby Boomer Generation	• Difficulty letting go of perceptions. • Lack of technology competence.	Being open to other ideas. Respecting what others have to say. Engage in open dialogue. Adapting to social media to connect with younger generations.
Generation X	• Feeling misunderstood • Others don't want to understand their challenges.	Implications of need for greater empathy. Willingness to listen from other generations

Post-Survey Questionnaire & Interviews

How has participating in an intergenerational discipleship program impacted your relationships with people of other age groups?

Seven out of ten participants responded. The silent generation acknowledged that participating in a seven-week discipleship project gave them a better understanding of other age groups. They stated, "I feel it has only enhanced my desire to better understand

and interact with other age groups." Baby boomers acknowledged that intergenerational collaboration was needed for the church to bridge the generational gaps that exist. Generation X acknowledged that the project gave them a better understanding of generational differences while extending praise to the fruitful dialogues that took place in the sessions. Generation Z acknowledged that participating in the project led to meaningful connections with other generations by understanding how the older generation processes theology, which deepened their appreciation for their wisdom and experiences.

What have you learned from the other generations in the discipleship group, and how has their perspective influenced your faith?

Seven out of ten participants responded. The silent generation learned that other generations would like for their ideas to be considered and valued, which will give hope for the future of the church. For baby boomers, the intergenerational discipleship project was an enriching experience that allowed diverse perspectives to be presented, allowing them to value the contribution of the older generation. There was an acknowledgment of the importance of traditional values, demonstrating how those values can strengthen faith and continuity within ministry. Generation X and Z had a common theme on how significant the Great Mission is to the church.

How has this intergenerational discipleship experience influenced your spiritual growth, and what new insights or practices have you incorporated into your life?

Seven out of ten participants responded showing unanimous understanding of greater intentionality in discipling by serving one another, praying, and committing to Bible study.

What challenges did you encounter in participating in a group with people from different age groups, and how did you work through them?

Seven out of ten participants responded. There were no challenges among silent generation and baby boomers. Generation X and Z agreed certain generations didn't want to change, but they overcame by having patience with each other and honest conversations.

How did the intergenerational nature of this discipleship project help build a sense of community and fellowship among the participants?

Seven out of ten participants responded, and the participants emphasized that working together built a level of intimacy and trust with each other.

Can you share an example of how you applied something you learned from someone of a different generation in your daily life or spiritual practices?

Seven out of ten participants responded. Across generations, participants learned to make a commitment to intentionally listen for the needs of other generations. The application took place within the context of their personal relationship with God. For example, across generations participants described being involved more with the youth and having open dialogue.

How do you think intergenerational discipleship can be further encouraged in your church or community, and what role do you see yourself playing in that?

Seven out of ten participants responded to this prompt with similar statements that expressed the desire to value the thoughts and ideas of others, work more with the Pastor of Operations to generate ideas from suggestions across generations, and vow to commit to greater involvement in the life of the church, bringing glory to God. The intergenerational discipleship project successfully bridged generational gaps, encouraged respect across generations, and inspired participants to grow in their faith and actively participate in the life of the church.

Overall Feedback

Overall, the feedback from the participants of the class was positive. Across all generations, there were expressions of appreciation for the opportunity to learn and have open and transparent discussions with other generations. All participants acknowledged that discipleship classes must continue. The "Intentional Discipleship Through a Bridge Building Model" DMin project was affirmed and gave hope to a growing community at New Hope Baptist Church.

Conclusion

This project explored the integration of an Intentional Intergenerational Discipleship Model designed to bridge the generational gap at New Hope Baptist Church of Metuchen. Its purpose was to reverse attrition and increase millennial retention through the development of a discipleship bridge-building model. The model utilized

both in-person gatherings and Zoom platforms for ninety-minute Sunday morning sessions. The class brought together a diverse group of participants, including two members of the silent generation, five baby boomers, two from Generation X, and one Generation Z participant. Over seven weeks, the curriculum maintained a consistent structure, combining lessons, activities, and interactive discussions. The program specifically sought to encourage millennial church members to engage in an intergenerational discipleship experience, equipping them with tools to strengthen their faith and deepen their commitment to the church.

However, in that respect, the project was not successful. Despite public announcements, sign-up sheets, and private invitations, no millennials participated. Their absence was attributed to scheduling conflicts, family obligations, distance, and a perceived lack of necessity for a discipleship program geared toward their generation. This group has also historically demonstrated inconsistent involvement in broader church life. Even though the initial focus on millennials did not produce the desired results, the intergenerational design of the project proved effective in fostering engagement and spiritual growth among participants from other generations.

Post-questionnaire surveys reflected this growth. For example, the Generation Z participant noted, "This experience has increased my desire to do more, to encourage other generations to participate in helping the church body to at least see and hear the concerns expressed by others." This response indicated a strengthened motivation to engage more deeply in church life, suggesting the participant was equipped with tools that enhanced her commitment to the church, informed by Jesus's teaching in Matthew 28:16–20, and the material covered during the first session. Several unexpected outcomes

emerged from the project. First, my confidence in teaching significantly increased. Previously, I had doubted whether I possessed the spiritual gift of teaching; however, designing the curriculum and facilitating the sessions revealed and affirmed this gift that God has entrusted to me. Second, the project ignited a lasting passion within me for discipleship and making disciples– not only at New Hope Baptist Church but within the wider body of Christ. I am now preparing to market and share this program with churches across the region, state, and beyond. Finally, the project served as a powerful reminder of my own need for continual discipleship. As Matthew 6:33 reminds us, we are to "seek first the kingdom of God" as an ongoing, intentional, personal commitment to being discipled and growing spiritually. This project also demonstrated the value of intentional discipleship through an intergenerational bridge-building model.

As a direct result of the project's efforts, the Generation Z participant officially joined the church and became a member of the young adult choir. Additionally, a previously non-member Generation X participant joined the church and became active on the media team. These outcomes highlight the tangible impact of the model in encouraging deeper engagement across generational lines. Reflecting on the project's outcomes and lessons learned, I recognize the need to enhance accessibility in future iterations.

One necessary revision would be adjusting the project's schedule to better accommodate participants' availability, particularly millennials. This could be achieved by surveying potential participants regarding preferred days, times, and formats, and offering multiple scheduling options. Ensuring flexibility and responsiveness to participants' needs will be critical to broadening engagement and strengthening the

effectiveness of future discipleship efforts. While the original goal of millennial engagement was not realized, the broader success of the project demonstrates the enduring value of intentional, intergenerational discipleship. The relationships formed, the spiritual growth observed, and the commitments to deeper church involvement underscore the transformative power of a model rooted in community, intentionality, and the teachings of Jesus Christ. This project not only shaped the participants' faith journeys but also deeply transformed my own, reaffirming my calling to teach, disciple, and continue building bridges across generations within the body of Christ.

APPENDIX A

PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

1. How do you define Christian discipleship and stewardship?
2. Do you believe that there is a specific age at when persons should begin taking Christian discipleship and stewardship seriously? If so, please identify what you believe that age is as well as to why you believe that the stated age is the most appropriate time for persons to take seriously Christian discipleship and stewardship.
3. How have you practiced Christian discipleship and stewardship thus far in your life?
4. When you have practiced Christian discipleship and stewardship, if you have practiced it yet, how did it make you feel? When answering this question, share all the details of your past experiences including how practicing Christian discipleship and stewardship made you feel, how you were viewed and understood by the people around you, and if it made you want to engage more in it.
5. What have been some of the drawbacks you have experienced as you have engaged in Christian discipleship and stewardship?
6. How has this church provided you with opportunities to engage in Christian discipleship and stewardship?
7. In what ways can this church improve on providing you and other persons in your age group with opportunities to engage in Christian discipleship and stewardship?

APPENDIX B

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE QUESTIONS

1. How has participating in an intergenerational discipleship program impacted your relationships with people of other age groups?
2. What have you learned from the other generations in the discipleship group, and how has their perspective influenced your faith?
3. How has this intergenerational discipleship experience influenced your spiritual growth, and what new insights or practices have you incorporated into your life?
4. What challenges did you encounter in participating in a group with people from different age groups, and how did you work through them?
5. How did the intergenerational nature of this discipleship project help build a sense of community and fellowship among the participants?
6. Can you share an example of how you applied something you learned from someone of a different generation in your daily life or spiritual practices?
7. How do you think intergenerational discipleship can be further encouraged in your church or community, and what role do you see yourself playing in that?

APPENDIX C

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does it look like for you to serve others in the name of Jesus?
2. What barriers or challenges prevent you from fully living out your faith in action?
3. What gifts, talents, and resources do you have to give to the church to serve it?
4. What role do you see yourself playing in the church or community as you grow in your faith?
5. What are the biggest challenges or obstacles that you face in your spiritual walk?
6. Why do we pray?
7. What does it mean for disciples to surrender our expectations of each other?
8. What can disciples learn from each other's experiences that might help them surrender their limits?

APPENDIX D

WEEKLY JOURNAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How do you currently engage in community and fellowship with other believers?
2. What role does accountability play in your spiritual life, and how do you seek support from others in your faith?
3. How would you describe your relationship with others in the church or faith community?
4. What do you hope to experience in terms of fellowship and support through this discipleship group?
5. Can you share an experience where you learned something valuable from someone of a different generation? How did that experience impact your spiritual life?
6. What do you think are some common stereotypes or misconceptions that different generations have about each other in the church or community?
7. What do you find to be the most challenging when it comes to communicating or connecting with people from other generations, and how can we overcome these challenges?

APPENDIX E

POST-INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on your seven-week spiritual journey, how has this discipleship program impacted your growth as a disciple?
2. What changes will you make as a result of being in this class?

APPENDIX F

TABLE 6.1 PARTICIPANTS GENERATIONAL DATES

Number	Birth Year	Generation
NHBC-P01	1970	Generation X
NHBC-P02	2004	Generation Z
NHBC-P03	1943	Silent Generation
NHBC-P04	1949	Baby Boomers
NHBC-P05	1962	Baby Boomers
NHBC-P06	1938	Silent Generation
NHBC-P07	1948	Baby Boomers
NHBC-P08	1970	Generation X
NHBC-P09	1963	Baby Boomers
NHBC-P10	1962	Baby Boomers

APPENDIX G

TABLE 6.2 GENERATIONAL CHALLENGES

Generation	Challenges	Feelings
Silent Generation (1928-1945)	• Rejection • Inadequacy	Insecurity, fatigue, connection
Baby Boomers (1946-1964)	• Time constraints • Health Issues	Burnout, over commitment
Generation X (1965-1980)	• Biblical illiteracy • Distractions • Regret	Self-doubt, anxiety, stress
Generation Z (1996-2012)	• Academic pressure • Burnout • Competition	Exhaustion, inconsistency

APPENDIX H

TABLE 6.3 GENERATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Generation	Accountability	Ways of Seeking Support
Silent Generation	• Fulfill commitments. • Accountability as a Christian obligation. • Commitment to God.	Values collaboration. Seeks help from others to accomplish God's work and welcomes assistance.
Baby Boomer	• Emphasizes integrity • Personal responsibility • Accountable to God.	Ministry support, counseling, prayer, intergenerational sharing, and direct communication with church leaders and members.
Generation Z	• Prioritizes God with other believers. • Values authenticity. • Openness in conversations.	In community with other believers, emphasizing shared faith and mutual encouragement.

APPENDIX I

TABLE 6.4 GENERATIONAL STEREOTYPES AND MISCONCEPTIONS

Generation Perspective	Stereotypes/Misconceptions About Other Generations
Older Generations as perceived by Silent Generation & Baby Boomers	Younger generations are self-centered, self-absorbed, resistant to positive suggestions, lacking commitment to God, overly reliant on technology, and lacking biblical knowledge.
Younger Generations as perceived by Silent Generation & Baby Boomers	Older generations are rigid, unforgiving, highly critical without understanding, stuck in old traditions, too divisive and political, and potentially hypocritical (not living what they preach).
Baby Boomers about Younger generations	Younger generations lack commitment in serving God, prefer everything through technology, don't have much knowledge about the Bible, and potentially have a "take over spirit," wanting to change doctrine and dilute worship.
Younger generations (Generation X and Z) about older generations (Baby Boomers & Silent Generation)	Older generations are set in their ways, want to do things the way they've always been done, and are perhaps too stringent about church practices.

APPENDIX J

TABLE 6.5 GENERATIONAL CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Generation	Challenges	Proposed Solutions
Silent Generation	• Lack of trust among generations. • Strain • Misunderstanding	Cultivate a genuine desire to approach interactions from a position of love and acceptance
Baby Boomer Generation	• Difficulty letting go of perceptions. • Lack of technology competence.	Being open to other ideas. Respecting what others have to say. Engage in open dialogue. Adapting to social media to connect with younger generations.
Generation X	• Feeling misunderstood • Others don't want to understand their challenges.	Implications of need for greater empathy. Willingness to listen from other generations

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